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INDEPENDENT SUPER NINTENDO MAGAZINE

スーパープレイ

ISSUE 2

DECEMBER 1992

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ZELDA III PLAYER'S GUIDE

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Most Wante

Name: The Gladiator.

Occupation: TV gameshow contestant.

Wanted: Wanted for appearing in the SNES game Super Smash TV. "Quite possibly the most frantic blast seen anywhere".

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Smash TV® © 1990.

Name: The Undertaker.

Occupation: WWF* Wrestler.

Wanted: Wanted for his bouts with all the stars of WWF* in Super WWF* Wrestlemania* on SNES. The most awesome pro-wrestling game to date.

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Name: Peter Parker, alias Spider-Man.

Occupation: Superhero, photographer.

Wanted: Wanted for appearing in the criminally brilliant SNES Spider-Man/X-Men, Arcade's Revenge.

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Dudes

Name: The Terminator.

Occupation: Saving the world from SKYNET.

Wanted: Wanted for T2™. A radical combat classic on SNES.

Terminator 2™ Judgment Day © 1992 Carolco Pictures Inc.
(US & Canada): Carolco International N.V.
(All other Countries).

Name: Bart Simpson.

Occupation: Part-time TV superstar.

Wanted: Wanted all over the world 'coz he's the numero uno cartoon star. In Bart's Nightmare on SNES he's at his most excellent.

The Simpsons ™ & © 1992 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation. All rights reserved.

Name: Krusty the Clown.

Occupation: TV clown.

Wanted: Wanted for Krusty's Super Funhouse on SNES. Beat this baby and we'll eat our shorts!

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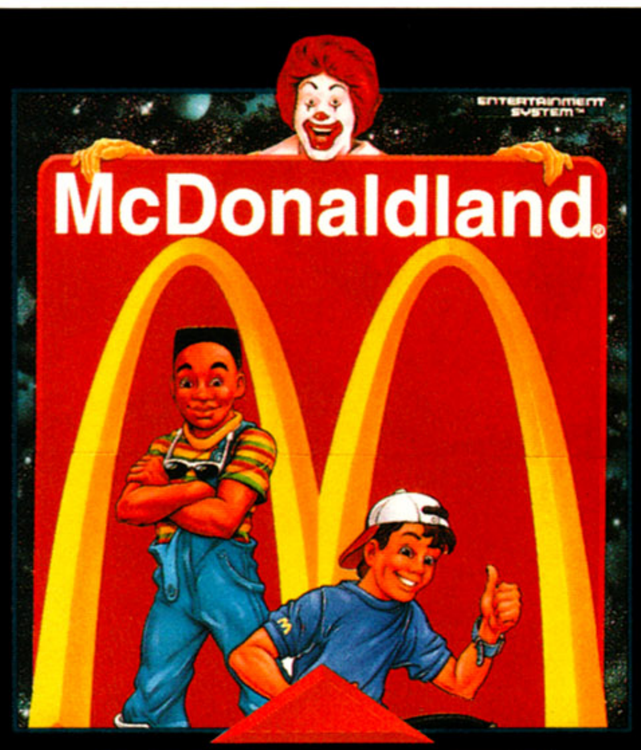
Acclaim™

THE WORD ON THE STREET



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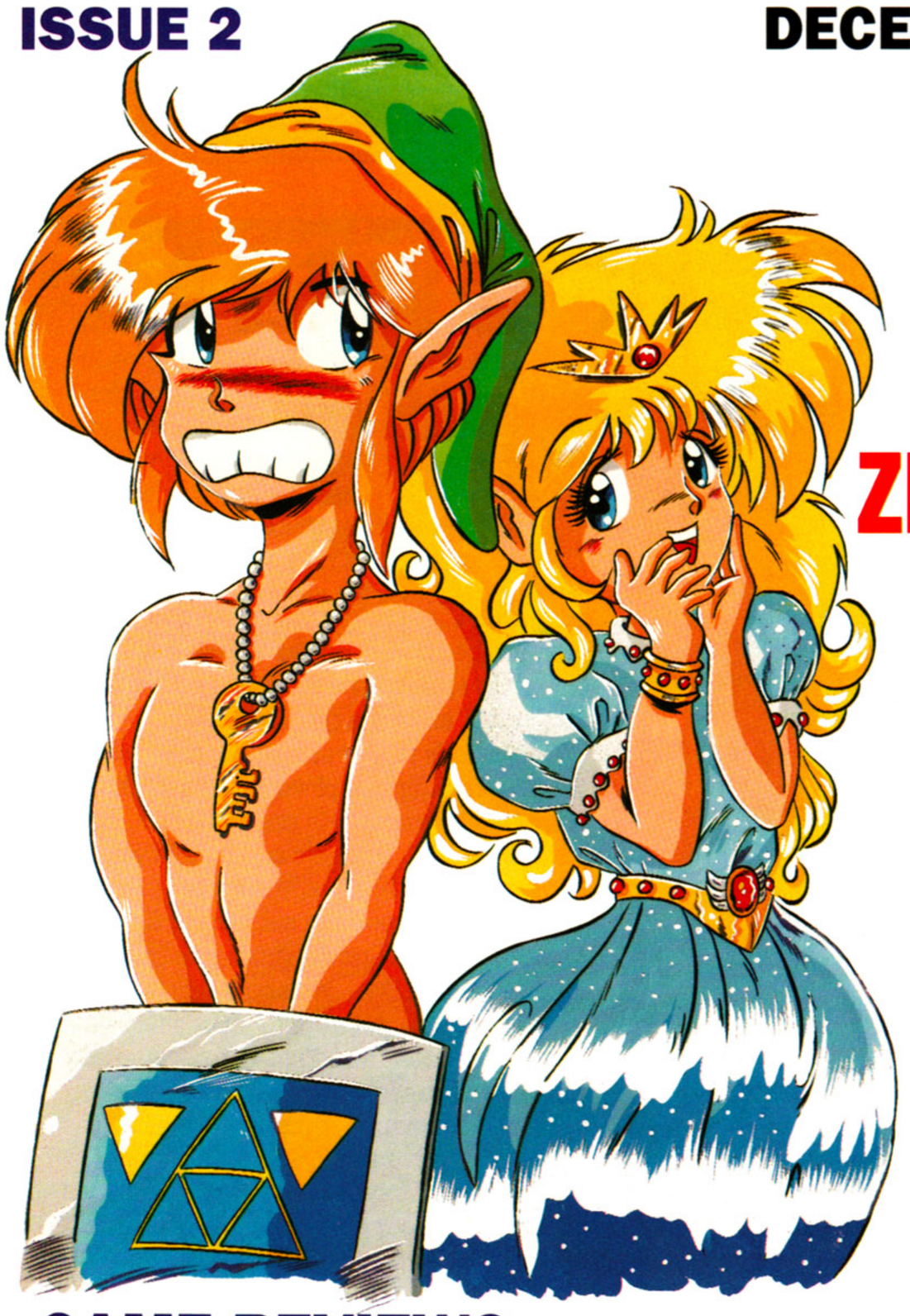

WE STRIP ZELDA III BARE!

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Editor: Matt Bielby; **Art Editor:** Traci Rochester; **Staff Writers:** Jason Brookes, Jonathan Davies; **Art Assistant:** Jeremy Bridgeman; **Production Editor:** Sue Grant; **Advertisement Manager:** Alison Morton; **Sales Executive:** Jane Geddes; **Classifieds:** Diane Erskine; **Publisher:** Steve Carey.
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SUPER EXPR

BIGGER BETTER MORE!

This month in S'Express: New SNES packs for Xmas, your SCART probs solved, biggest Jap game queue ever, *Street Fighter II* CD.

Welcome back to *Super Play*. If you bought the first issue you'll see some significant changes this month – chiefly that we've now got more pages (making us the biggest Super NES mag by an even greater margin), and some better, heavier paper, but also some detail stuff you'll probably notice as you go through the mag. For new readers, congratulations – not only have you just bought the best video games machine currently available, you've picked up the best magazine there is on the subject too. This is going to be the Christmas where the Super Nintendo really takes off in this country, and you've got in on the ground floor.

So what's in this month's issue? Well, What Cart?, our complete guide to existing Super NES games, gets updated, of course, while Jonathan Davies explains all there is to know about baseball on the system. Baseball is an incredibly popular subject for SNES games in the US and Japan, but telling them apart can be tricky – we show you how.

Then we've got Super Player's Guides to *Super Mario Kart* and *Zelda III*, cover artist Wil Overton reviews games based on Japanese animation, there's a report on the recent Tokyo Nintendo show by games creator Peter Molyneux, and we've reviews coming out of our ears – including the spectacular *Axelay* and the official UK debut of *Zelda III*. All this and it's only November.

Finally, if you bought this issue as it came out, there's still time for you to come to the console event of the year, the Future Entertainment Show at Earl's Court from 5 to 8 November. Hope to see you there.

Matt Bielby

Editor

DECEMBER 1992 ISSUE 2

SUPER PLAY PROFILES

This magazine is brought to you by:

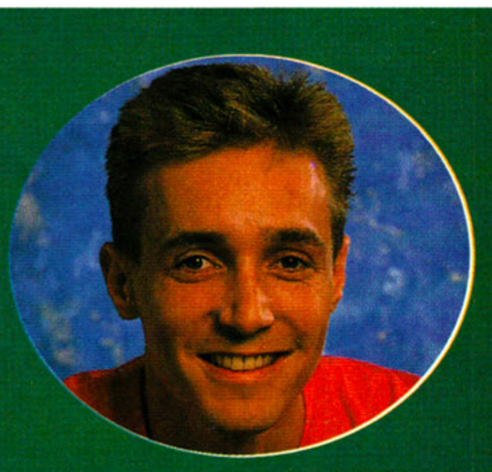
MATT BIELBY

Job title: Editor
First love: Farrah Fawcett Majors
Favourite film: *Miller's Crossing*
First gig I ever went to: Rainbow in Leeds, early '80s
Worst nightmare: One where I was trapped in a crushing machine I kept having when I was about six
Where I'll be in the year 2000: Editing some sort of CD games mag, probably

SUE GRANT

Job title: Production Editor
First love: Christian Page (I think) at school
Favourite film: *Blade Runner*
First gig I ever went to: The Clash in Bristol, about 1979
Worst nightmare: Sundays at about 4pm
Where I'll be in the year 2000: In an old folk's home

JASON BROOKES



Job title: Staff Writer
First love: Nicola Truswell, in Third Year at High Legh Primary School
Favourite film: *The Player*
First gig I ever went to: Lloyd Cole at Manchester Apollo, 1986
Worst nightmare: Finding out Jeremy Beadle is my dad
Where I'll be in the year 2000: Hollywood

ESS

REMEMBER THESE GUYS FROM OUR INTERVIEW LAST MONTH? THEY REALLY *DO* DEVELOP SUPER NES GAMES. HERE'S PROOF...

Super Nintendo developers don't tend to get much publicity, which left a few people saying 'Who?' when we interviewed the bosses of Software Creations last issue. In fact, Software Creations are fast developing into important creators – if you haven't played one of their games yet, you will have soon, we guarantee it. Leading the assault are these two new releases, both talked about (but not shown) last issue. Here then, to make up for the tease, are what they're *really* like...

Spiderman & The X-Men in 'Arcade's Revenge'

ACCLAIM

This is the first of the two games we'll see in the shops – it's due out imminently. Spiderman and The X-Men are (of course) some of Marvel Comics biggest selling characters, Arcade is a second division super villain who happens to have fought them all and so has been dragged in here, and the game is a multi-level platform hack-, blast- and web-'em-up which sends our heroes (one at a time) on a mission against him and his robot lackies. Arcade has trapped the good guys in his elaborate Murder World (a sort of crazed Disneyland), you see, and challenged them each to escape – there are 17 levels in the game, with three stages per character, and lots of action.

Spiderman's bits see him swinging around on his web lines, climbing walls and stuff, while the X-Man Wolverine uses his indestructible claws to hack his way out of trouble. Other heroes include the weather-controlling mutant Storm (who's, oddly enough, been put in a swimming section for no good reason we can think of), X-Man leader Cyclops and recent-addition Gambit, who throws exploding playing cards at the baddies! The game is due to be released by Acclaim in both America and this country sometime in November.

Left: *Spiderman & The X-Men*, and Gambit, the newest member of the 'uncanny' X-Men looks like his luck might have just run out. The giant spiked ball seems keen to do an Indiana Jones-style crushing act on him, and there's no obvious way out...
Below: Rather lovely isometric 3D graphics in *Equinox*. Those ghosts (don't touch!) look rather like jelly moulds, while the *Prince Of Persia*-style central character was actually designed by Sony, then sent to Software Creations for inclusion in the game!

Built up of two worlds – the surface, and a network of tunnels and dungeons – the game has taken some 18 months to put together. In the surface world, spectacular Mode 7 3D allows you to rotate the map and move to the area you want to go to next, while underground you have to move through the eight dungeon levels one at a time, collecting money and weapons and killing monsters as you go. As you travel you collect mystical tokens which allow you to use new spells, and take on the end of level bosses. *Equinox* is packed with traps, which get more complex as you move through the levels – though the game has much in common with the *Zelda* series, say, it's rather more puzzle orientated. It's very atmospheric too – particularly in its use of music. Look out for it.

Equinox

SONY IMAGESOFT

Also developed by Software Creations for release over the next few months (no date set yet) is *Equinox*, the sequel to their ultra-successful NES game *Solstice*, which caused quite a stir a couple of years back. Like *Solstice*, *Equinox* is a 3D isometic adventure, a style of game that was very popular on home computers a few years back, but somehow never really seems to have taken off on consoles.

JONATHAN DAVIES

Job title: Staff Writer
First love: My red pedal car
Favourite film: *The Empire Strikes Back*
First gig I ever went to: The Shadows at Bristol Colston Hall, 1981
Worst nightmare: Life
Where I'll be in the year 2000: In bed

TRACI ROCHESTER

Job title: Art Editor
First love: Donny Osmond
Favourite film: *Angel Heart*
First gig I ever went to: Gary Glitter in Coventry
Worst nightmare: *Super Play* issue 1
Where I'll be in the year 2000: Still driving around in circles

JEREMY BRIDGEMAN

Job title: Art Assistant
First love: Isla St Claire
Favourite film: *North By Northwest*
First gig I ever went to: Five Star (Crunchie Tour) at Bristol Colston Hall, 1986ish
Worst nightmare: Either waking up and finding all my hair gone, or arriving on holiday and I've lost all my luggage
Where I'll be in the year 2000: International playboy

SUPER PLAY PROFILES QUIZ

This month's question: Take a long look at the smiling faces opposite, and try to work out who was once chased by a homicidal horse across a series of Scottish fields for 'about two hours'. First correct entry to: Mad Horse Competition, *Super Play*, 30 Monmouth St, Bath BA1 2BW wins a *Super Play* T-shirt!

ONLY IN JAPAN...

You want high tech games machines? You go to Japan. You want crazy weirdness? You go to exactly the same place...

PC/MEGA DRIVE CROSS BREED

● Amstrad and (Nintendo's arch-rival) Sega are to combine two of their machines to create an odd PC compatible/games console hybrid. (Similar to Sega's own PC/Mega Drive hybrid – the Terradrive.) Amstrad's IBM compatible computer and Sega's Mega Drive games console will donate a processor each, creating a joint PC/games machine capable of running both complex PC games and plug-in Mega Drive carts like *Sonic* – at the same time functioning as a home business machine. Rumours suggest a price of £899 (complete with *Sonic The Hedgehog* cart) for this twin-processor machine, with an on-sale date near Christmas – though we have to ask, why would anyone want it? Surely buying a separate SNES (for example) and PC would be a better idea...? (Now check out the Japanese show report, page 14, for more.)

ONLY IN AMERICA...

Of course, there's *one* other country that can give Japan a run for its money in the weirdness stakes...

GAMES JUST FOR THE GIRLS

● Only available for the NES so far, and it's not clear yet if they'll make the Super NES, but Nintendo Of America are currently trying to tackle a whole new market: Girls! *Barbie goes Shopping*, based around the adventures of the glamorous doll in a shopping mall, where she has to buy the best value clothes, etc, and the 'Nintendo Mat' (for computerised aerobics), are on sale in American stores, with similar to follow. Sadly no news as to whether anyone intends to start importing them yet...

FIVE FROM OCEAN

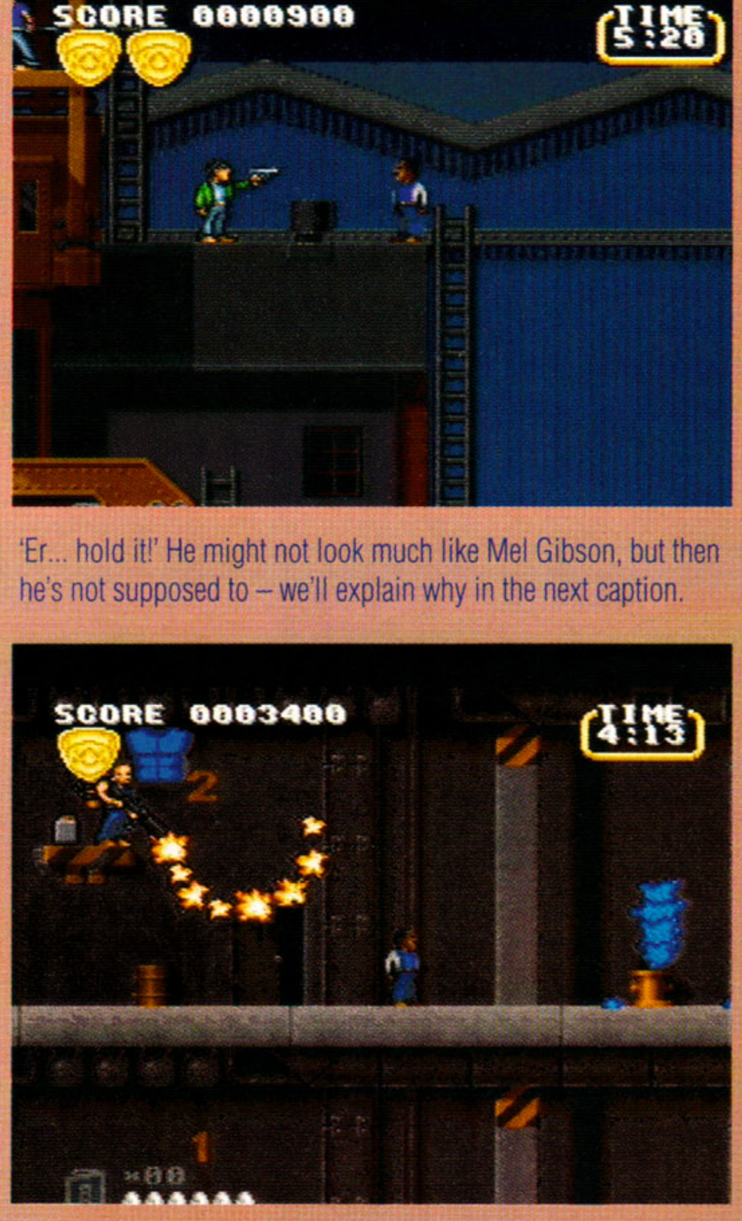
BRITAIN'S PREMIERE GAMES PUBLISHER GETS INTO SNES BIG TIME

Of all the big British software houses, Ocean are probably the one that's taking the Super NES most seriously. Most of their best teams have been transferred to the SNES, with games like *The Addams Family* earning worldwide acclaim. Two of their newest – *Robocop 3* and the bought-in *Exhaust Heat* – are reviewed this issue, but here *Super Play* looks at some of the other games you can expect from them over the next six months...

LETHAL WEAPON

Based on all three movies – not just the recent *Lethal 3* – this is a giant platform shoot-'em-up/switch-pulling affair, looking not dissimilar to Ocean's old Amiga *Hudson Hawk* game. Featuring various missions of the drugs bust/rescue hostages type (based on movie sequences), and allowing you to switch between the characters of Riggs and Murtagh when one dies, it's perhaps most noteable for the very small size (and lack of resemblance to the film originals!) of the sprites. Out early next year.

'Er... hold it!' He might not look much like Mel Gibson, but then he's not supposed to – we'll explain why in the next caption.



You see, it costs more money (usually) and takes an extra contract to use the likeness of a real star for a sprite – one Ocean haven't got. (Also, this *isn't* Mel – it's Danny Glover!)

MR NUTS

You may remember Ocean France from things like *Pang* and *Toki* on the Amiga – they did some of the most graphically impressive, arcade-perfect conversions of coin-ops ever released by a UK software house. Things have changed since then – their link with Ocean UK is no longer quite so strong – but it's the same programmers who've put together *Mr Nuts* (tentative title) for them, and it's clear they've learnt something from their past experience.

Mr Nuts is, as you can probably tell, a rather large squirrel, who wanders around a series of (very pretty) platform environments, throwing hazelnuts at equally sizeable wasps, hedgehogs and other woodland sprites. He himself is a rather appealing character, not unlike Sonic's new pal Two Tails (from Sega's new *Sonic 2*). Expect a release next Summer.

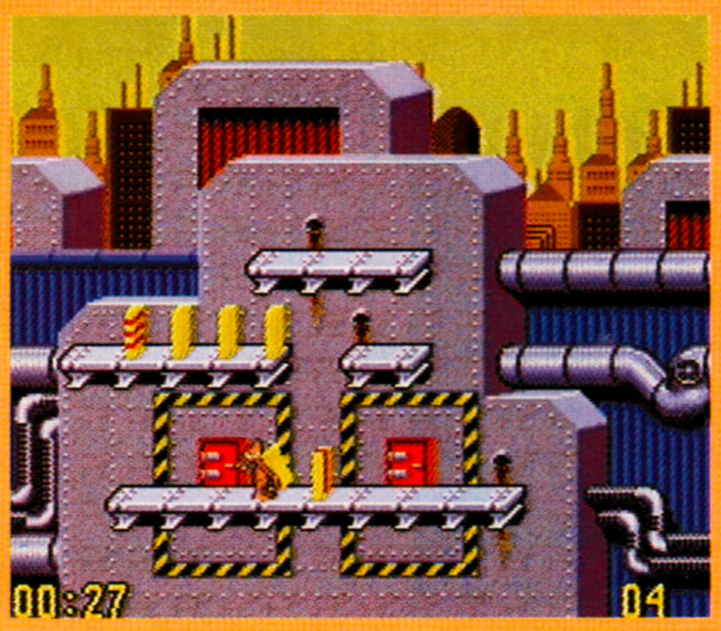
If you were wondering what'd happened to Tufty the Squirrel, he's changed his name to 'Mr Nuts', and dumped all his little woodland friends – but we'd know that cheeky grin anywhere. Let's hope he doesn't walk out under a bus, eh?

Here's Tufty again, this time trying to avoid some refugees from a Ribena advert. These were about the only baddies to be seen in the version of the game we looked at, though we're assured the finished one will be *crawling* with them. (Um... Did you know that rodents' teeth never stop growing, incidentally?)

PUSHOVER

Knocking over dominoes may not seem like the most obvious basis for a video game. But then, laying into formations of aliens with a laser probably didn't to start off with, either.

The trick with *Pushover* lies in the variety of different dominoes you're given to 'push over'. As well as your standard 'dumb' dominoes, which just topple over when they're knocked, there are ascenders, exploders and a host of other 'special' ones – giving a whole new meaning to the game. At the beginning of each level they're all jumbled up, and need to be positioned correctly by carrying them around. Once everything's set up right, knocking over just one domino should set off a chain reaction that clears the screen. As you might imagine, the game starts off simply enough but soon gets mind-bogglingly difficult. Luckily you're provided with passwords each time you complete a level, which should make life a little easier.

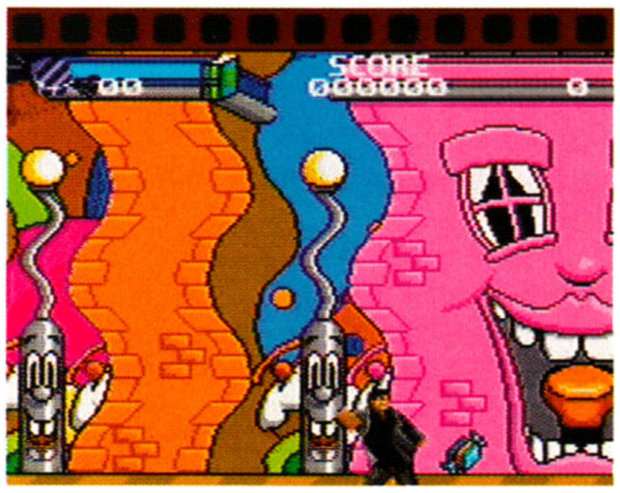


Right: G.I. Ant, hero of *Pushover* (if 'hero' is the right word for someone who just carries dominoes about, then pushes them over), wonders where to place this particularly pesky one. Quaver fans will be disappointed to hear Colin Curley, nominal star of the Amiga game, doesn't make it to the SNES. Above: Now try toppling *this* little lot!

COOL WORLD

Based on the straight-to-video *Roger Rabbit*-lookalike film, this is one of the most unusual movie-related games yet – a mad platform-based runaround featuring a human(ish) central character exploring twin cartoon worlds, the night-time-in-Soho Cool World, and the ultra-cute (but equally deadly) Sweet Place. We say human-ish, because our hero can actually morph his body rather like the evil Terminator in *T2*, turning his hands into gigantic hammer-like weapons, etc. To be released March '93.

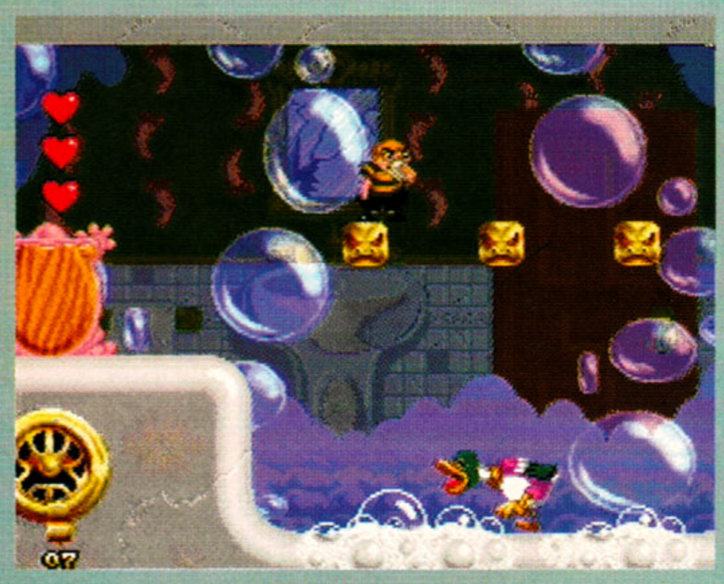
Shh! Here we are in the library, not doing much morphing as such, but still looking quite tough.



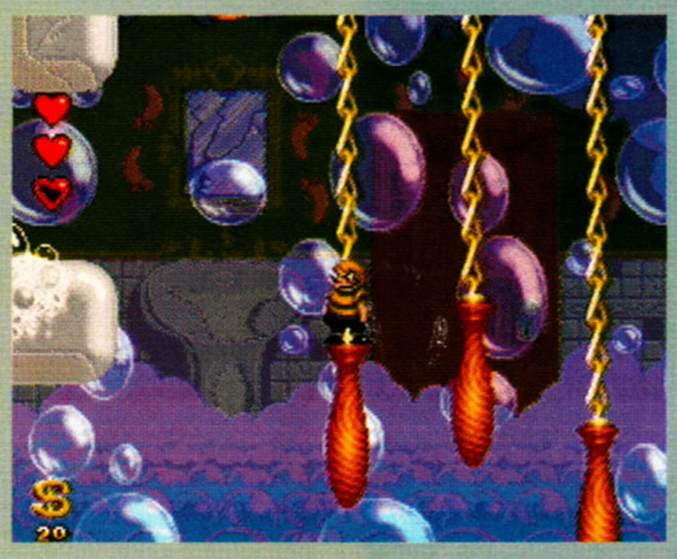
You'll be able to nip into a number of the buildings along this spooky, wobbly street in Sweet Place, each one containing a different sub-level.

THE ADDAMS FAMILY: PUGSLEY'S SCAVENGER HUNT

One of the first of this new wave of SNES games (expect a release at the beginning of next year), and also one of the most promising, is this excellent second *Addams* game – a funnier, more cartoon-like platform romp set, like the first game, in various areas of the Addams' mansion. It's based on the recent successful American *Addams* cartoon series, and features some particularly strong sound effects, just one standout feature in a generally top-notch game. There's an interview with the creators on page 26.



Above: Looks like the bathroom's turned into some sort of wildfowl sanctuary! As you can see, this new game features teenage Pugsley rather than family head Gomez (who featured in the first game), in an adventure originally intended to be lighter, funnier and aimed more at the younger player than *The Addams Family*. (For whether that worked out quite as planned, check out the interview later in Super Express!)



The Addams' certainly own a weird house – the toilet's got three loo chains! These bubbles are gorgeous.

Left: One of the big – and very impressive – end-of-level boss characters from the new game. He'll take some killing (though our Pugsley doesn't look very worried!)
Above: Our hero enters one of the giant ice fridges the family seem to have to keep all their food in – doesn't that big green thing at the bottom look yummy?

NEW NINTENDO PACKS FOR CHRISTMAS

NOW THERE ARE FOUR WAYS TO BUY AN OFFICIAL SUPER NES!

Nintendo's official UK hardware line-up for this Christmas has recently been announced, with the Super Nintendo going on sale in four different packs, replacing the one current option (SNES plus *Super Mario World* plus two controllers for £149). The new line-up is as follows – all these packs should be in the shops now.

Super Nintendo 'Solus Set' £109

This is the Super Nintendo with nothing else attached – just the machine, one controller, and that's it. It's a very attractive price, certainly, but really most people would be better off going for the next pack up, which adds the excellent *Super Mario World* for only an extra £20.

Super Nintendo *Super Mario World* pack £129

Replacement for the familiar pack, this has only one controller, true, but then it *is* £20 cheaper. The one most likely to be bought in massive numbers by mums and dads as Christmas presents up and down the country.

Super Nintendo Super Scope pack £169.99

With this one you get the Super NES, the Super Scope bazooka-like light gun and a cart with six (fairly poor) games on it. There's one standard controller included too. It's an attractive pack – though when you think that the Scope costs £59.99 as a stand-alone item, you're making no real saving over buying it and the Solus pack separately. The *real* problem, however, is that it's stacked in the shops next to...

Super Nintendo *Street Fighter II* pack £159

This is the big one – yer Super Nintendo, a controller, *plus* the ultra-hot, brilliant *Street Fighter II* cart. This set alone is expected to account for a third of the 450,000 Super Nintendos Bandai expect to shift between now and January.

The official UK version of the Super Nintendo – now there are four ways to buy it. Expect the *Street Fighter II* pack and the new *Super Mario World* pack especially to shift like hot cakes.

As most of you will have seen, *Street Fighter II* is now available at retailers up and down the country on official UK release. It went on sale on Saturday 26 September, three weeks before schedule, at the incredible price of £64.95 – a good £15 more than the price most specialist shops are selling the imported American version at! Despite this, such is the buzz about this game – with mainstream media coverage of its release guaranteed – that Bandai, Nintendo's UK agents, swear it's walking off the shelves...

STREET FIGHTER II ON CD!

(The music, that is)

Game music CDs have been popular in Japan for years, where it's possible to get both reworked and original versions of music from popular coin-ops and console games. *Street Fighter II* has just received it's second and third 'tributes' on CD (both costing around 3,000 yen, or £12), one of which is the story behind the game, acted out like a radio play. It includes a couple of proper songs, including *Jumpin' To The Sky*(!) sung by rising Japanese hopeful Toma Yumi (who plays Chun Li in the story!) Finding game music CDs in the UK can be tricky – try Console Concepts (0782) 712759, or The Japan Centre, Brewer St, London (071) 439 8035, as possible sources.

NINTENDO'S ANTI-RENTAL CAMPAIGN

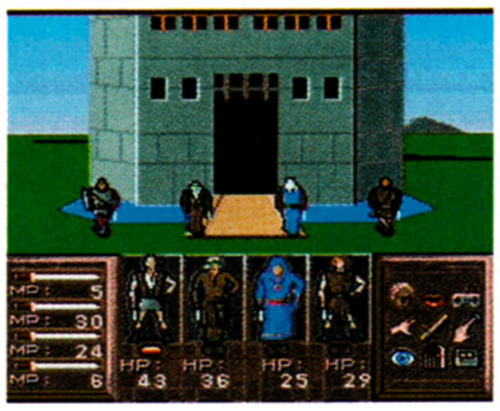
Nintendo's lack of interest in the cart rental arena has turned into outright hostility – to the extent that official UK distributer Bandai has announced a tie-up with FAST (the Federation Against Software Theft) to help combat it. Notices are appearing in trade magazines for the video games sales, electronics retail and newsagent industries warning that legal action will be taken against those renting out games, along with letters to be sent to offending individuals. Whether legal action *will* then be taken hasn't yet been made clear.

FRENCH CARTS FOR THE UK

Super Full Metal Planet and *Drakkhen* for February release.

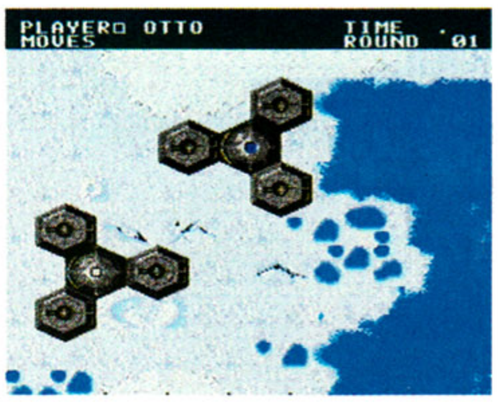
French software house Infogrames have their first two games for UK release around February next year – and they're both not the sort of thing you'd expect from the likes of Konami, Capcom and the rest. No, they're strategy/role playing things, aimed at the older player – if you're a shoot-'em-up freak, you'll find little to interest you here.

However, for fans of the more serious type of game, *Super Full Metal Planet* and *Drakkhen* might sound very interesting indeed. *Planet* is set on an ore-rich world in the far future, and allows up to four players (plus computer controlled rival companies) to compete for its riches any way they know how. *Drakkhen*, on the other hand, is more your traditional FRP – again allowing for up to four players, it lets each of your characters independently interact with their environment whether you are actually controlling them at the time or not.

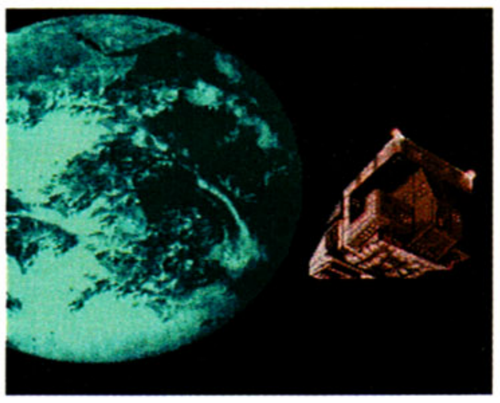


3D game presentation in *Drakkhen*. Enter this castle to begin your quest.

As you can see, the bottom of the screen contains messages, player stats etc.



A typical in-game screen from *Full Metal Planet*, packed with lots of lovely hexes!



Part of the pretty intro sequence, as you approach the *Full Metal Planet*.

SUPER FAMICOM: FOUR PLAYER ADAPTOR ON THE WAY!

Two companies in Japan have units ready for release – Hori and Hudsonsoft. Hudsonsoft's, called the Super Multi-Tap (top), is due this month, and the first game to use it is *Super Momotaro Train 2* - a board game conversion. Expect a new multi-player version of *Dynablaster/Bomberman* to appear from Hudsonsoft next year.Hori's version of more-or-less the same thing (below) is also complete, though a release date for it hasn't been set.

SUPER PLAY'S HOT LIST

Here are five of our favourite Super Nintendo games, all recently released. You wouldn't go far wrong with any of them. (Or, indeed, *all* of them.)

BART'S NIGHTMARE

ACCLAIM: Even if you hate The Simpsons (which, in our our opinion, you're perfectly entitled to do), *Bart's Nightmare* is well worth a look. It's got wonderful cartoon graphics, and there's loads of variety to the game thanks to its multi-level design. And, what more, it's actually quite funny too. Well worth a look, that's for sure.

SUPER MARIO KART

NINTENDO: This has been played more often this month than all our other games put together. The Grand Prix is superb fun in itself, racing against all Mario's chums, but the two-player 'balloon game' is simply the best thing ever. Wait for the UK version if you've got a UK SNES – imported ones are incompatible. (But see adaptor story.)

STREET FIGHTER II

CAPCOM: Last month we told you what a brilliant beat-'em-up *Street Fighter II* is. It still is. (*Er... – Ed.*) And, now that it's available officially in the UK, you've got no excuse for not buying it. (Well, maybe you have – it is horribly expensive, although there's always the *Street Fighter II* SNES pack.) A best-seller across the world, and once you've played it it's easy to see why.

UN SQUADRON

CAPCOM: Last month we told you what a brilliant horizontally-scrolling shoot-'em-up *Parodius* is. It still is. But, if cute little blue penguins aren't really your scene, *UN Squadron* makes a brilliant alternative. It's much harder than *Parodius*, and has lots of top-notch parallax too.

SUPER ALESTE

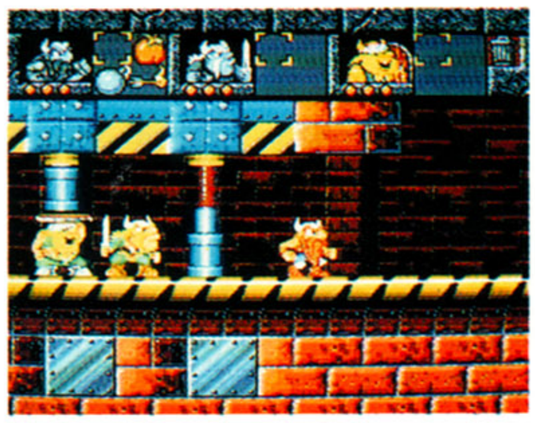
TOHO: If you reckon the main ingredients of a decent shoot-'em-up are lots of baddies, fast scrolling and ridiculously unfeasible power-ups, look no further than this. It's got the absolute ultimate in power-ups, and some of the most gorgeous graphics ever – the definitive vertical scroller as far as we're concerned.

VIKING'S FUNERAL

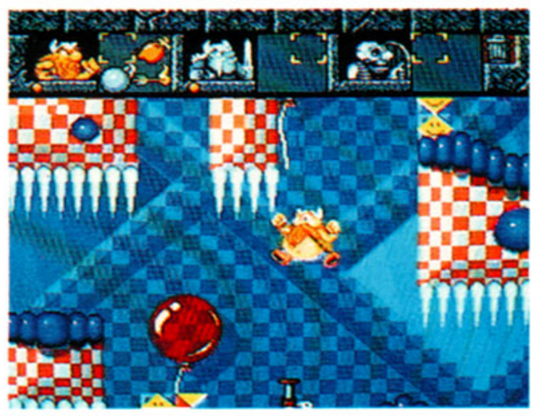
INTERPLAY'S TIME TRAVELLING ARCADE ADVENTURE FOR IMMINENT RELEASE

THE LOST VIKINGS
Interplay

The Lost Vikings is a light hearted, puzzle-based arcade adventure featuring three distinct characters – viking warriors from the ancient north who've been zapped aboard a gigantic alien space ship, and must now fight (or think!) their way out! (Being of a hit-first-ask-questions-later mentality this thinking stuff obviously takes a bit of effort.) Worse, many of the doors they open on the ship throw them into alternative time zones, where they must fight dinosaurs, ancient Egyptian mummies and all sorts of historical bad guys! The game features three distinctive characters – each with a different special ability – who must work together if they're to survive. With over 40 levels, and plenty of humorous asides, this could prove to be the surprise hit of next year. Look for it sometime in early '93.



Our three heroes line up. You control one guy at a time, while the others wait for him.



There are some lovely graphics on view too, with *lots* of very bright colours used.

HUMAN GRAND PRIX

Driving fans yearning for a decent split screen Formula One race game – and that's most of us – should be pleased to hear that top sports game company Human is to release its own Grand Prix game. The programmers of *Human Grand Prix* hope to achieve a greater sense of realism than we've seen in previous racers, with smoother graphics than in *Aguri Suzuki* and plenty of real drivers – including old Nige himself. The game has four modes to choose between – in 'battle' mode you play a friend either simultaneously or against the computer, 'World Grand Prix' is just like the real thing (well, *kind of...*), while 'Test Run' is for practise and 'Record' sets you record lap times and so on to aim for. The game also includes a band new steering system, one never seen in a racing game before, but for details of what that is, you'll have to wait for the review. (The idea, apparently, is to make it all much more like real driving.) The game has just been released in Japan, at a very hefty (for Japan, that is!) 9,700 yen (about £46). Goodness knows how much it'll be by the time it makes it over here – we'll keep you posted.

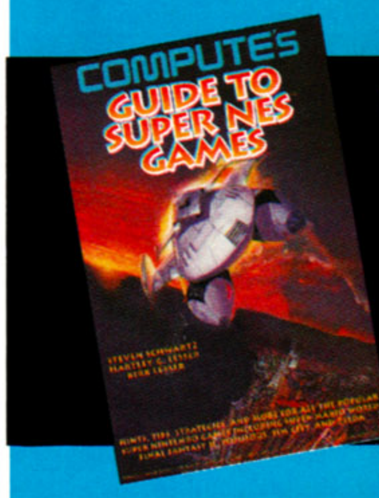
Human Grand Prix – four modes and a brand new steering system combine to promise what may be the best SNES Formula One game yet.

STOP PRESS!...STOP PRESS!...STOP PRESS!...

- Recently released is the US conversion of excellent Atari coin-op *Race Drivin'*. A Super Nintendo game that relies on polygon graphics has its work cut out for it (until the new Super FX chip arrives, that is), so it's no surprise that this falls well short of the original – it's jerk city all the way, we're afraid. You can count on the full low-down next issue.
- Also next issue we should have a copy of the multi-player maze game, *Faceball 2000*, on SNES. Imagine *Pac-man* played from a first person perspective (ie you're actually in the maze) and you'll be half way there. Full review next issue.

BOOKS

Jonathan Davies thumbs through more Super Nintendo tips books, and likes some of what he finds...

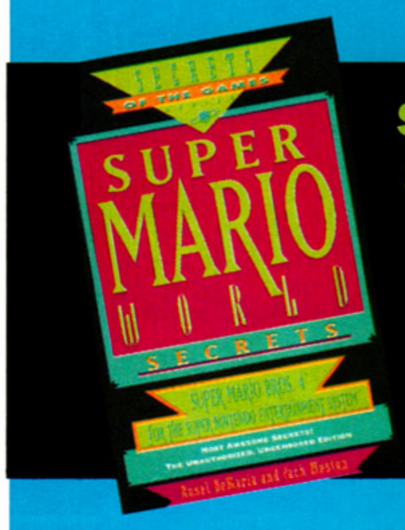


COMPUTE'S GUIDE TO SUPER NES GAMES
Steven Scwartz, Hartley G. Lesser, Kirk Lesser.
Compute Books, 278pp, £11.95.
ISBN 0-87455-249-4

Compute's attempt at an all-embracing games guide has an immediate advantage over Prima's *Super NES Games Secrets* (£8.95): it was published only recently, and is therefore able to embrace a whopping 36 titles. Still far from comprehensive, then, but reassuringly meaty.

The downside of this is that the space available for each title is correspondingly reduced, a problem compounded by the authors' inclination to regurgitate vast tracts of the instructions supplied with the games. That means only around half of each game's alotted space is of any strategic value, and some games really shouldn't be there at all. The section on *Chessmaster*, for example, tells you nothing you couldn't find out for yourself from the instructions. And, while the book tries to provide a brief critical appraisal of each game (something Prima avoid), this tends to be of the ludicrously over-enthusiastic American variety and isn't of much practical use. Stick to *Super Play*'s What Cart? if it's a buyer's guide you're after.

Still, if you can fight your way through the useless baggage, there's actually plenty of valuable information lurking underneath. Cheat-modes are ignored – this is all strictly above board – but the tips are written by people who obviously know what they're talking about. Lots of games per pound, that's for sure.



SUPER MARIO WORLD SECRETS
Rusel DeMaria, Zach Meston.
Prima Publishing, 280pp, £11.95.
ISBN 1-55958-156-5

A book devoted to one game might sound like suicide, but fortunately both the authors and the game itself are up to the challenge. I knew that *Super Mario World* was huge, but hadn't realised just *how* huge until I read this. Messers DeMaria and Meston have had no difficulty in finding enough info to fill this book, and it's essential reading if you want to get the most from the game.

The book begins with a history of Mario (did you know he made his debut in 1981?) and a brief run-down of the game's workings, then plunges into an almost impossibly detailed explanation of every single feature in the entire game, and how to go about discovering them for yourself. Every baddy is listed, along with a strategy to defeat it. There's a checklist of all 96 goals you need to reach to score maximum points. Every world is mapped out, including the two secret ones, and every last inch of them is thoroughly tipped. If you're serious about *Mario*, this is a book of almost religious significance.

If you're having trouble tracking down these books, give Computer Manuals (who provided our review copies) a call on (021) 706 6000, or write to them at Computer Manuals Ltd, 50 James Road, Tyseley, Birmingham B11 2BA.

- TWO OF A KIND -

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imagineer

SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

SUPER PLAY VISITS THE GREATEST NINTENDO SHOW ON EARTH!

TOKYO

Do you recognise this man? You may well do – it's Peter Molyneux, the head honcho at Bullfrog, creators of games like *Populous* and *Powermonger*, which are both now available on Super Nintendo. Though he'd probably deny it, Peter is actually quite a star in Japan, constantly appearing in the Japanese games magazines. In August this year he went to Tokyo for the big Nintendo show, the Shoshinkai Software Show, where *Populous 2* and *Powermonger* were being displayed – and on the side he did a bit of snooping around for *Super Play*. Here's his report...

Japan – land of the rising sun, and home to cameras, videos, gadgets and, of course, the Nintendo. The Japanese are a confident people. They seem to feel that they're very much in control of their own future and, increasingly, ours too. All rather worrying for a Westerner, especially a simple country boy from Guildford like me, though on arriving in Japan you soon feel your cynicism begin to drift away.

The great Japanese enthusiasm for everything has that effect on you.

I was in Tokyo, along with Les Eggar, my partner at Bullfrog, for the Shoshinkai Show. After our 13 hour flight from London we arrived feeling totally knackered – not surprisingly, all I wanted to do was go back to the hotel to grab some sleep. Some hope – there at the airport, waiting to greet us, was a smiling Japanese chap from Imagineer. He had come to pick me up and take me directly to the Nintendo show – seems there was no time to stop off even to dump our bags or take a quick shower. However, there was a problem – he could see I was flagging fast (indeed, it looked unlikely I'd remain upright all the way across town, let alone throughout the show) so something had to be done.

Unfortunately, the Japanese are well prepared for useless, jet-lagged Westerners, and my guide had just the solution at hand. He dragged me over to a vending machine mounted on the airport wall, and bought me a 'Hi-pis' (!) high energy drink – it tasted disgusting, of course, but was packed with as much caffeine as about 2,000 black coffees, fed to you through an intravenous drip. I wasn't exactly rested, but I was buzzing enough to make it to the show.

Travelling in Japan is always an experience, and although I'd been to the country before, this was my first time on a Japanese train. I'd vaguely expected the rail system to be very high tech, and wasn't disappointed – the doors opened with a *Star Trek* swish, and each carriage had a video screen at one end, feeding travellers with constantly updated news reports. (I couldn't help wondering if the train were to crash whether news of the wreck would be posted up there for anyone who hadn't noticed.) Even better, though, was a cute little display that indicated with lights the gradual progress of the train along the tracks. In no time at all we'd arrived at our station. Next stop, the Nintendo show.

SHOW FEVER, JAPANESE STYLE

The Nintendo Show was held at one of the big exhibition halls in Tokyo – a place which dwarfs somewhere like Earls Court. My first impression was simply one of people – thousands of them, and this was just a trade day! (The public weren't going to be let in till later.) The show was generally well laid out, with neat railings along which people formed orderly queues to take their chance at playing the new Nintendo products. (The Japanese are even more fanatical about queuing than we are.)

The longest queue was, unsurprisingly, for the newest *Mario* game, *Super Mario Kart* (reviewed in *Super Play* last ish). From the initial

Clockwise: Me and Les outside the show – I never found out the proper name of this hall, but it was *huge*; Riding the Tokyo tube trains – incredibly clean, tidy and full of well behaved people. I didn't get on at rush hour though – they really cram them in then; Hi-pis high energy drink – it tastes disgusting, but does the job.

PETER MOLYNEUX'S DIARY

(CENSORED FOR FAMILY READING)

Top: Look at this! People in Tokyo, all queuing up, waiting to play my game. The Imagineer stand was a constant ego-boost; Japanese game freaks are so keen they bring their Game Boys to the show. That way, they don't lose valuable playing time while having a rest, waiting in a queue or whatever. Now *that's* dedication.

Sega's *Sonic* more than anything. One endearing thing about them is the determined rejection of violence (very unlike their full size cartoon parents), in both the game and the TV shows. Nothing in *Tiny Toon* land ever dies, it just goes to sleep. The Toons illustrate the Japanese love of Cute, that's for sure. Whereas

back in Britain we tend to decapitate and dismember our teddy bears after the age of 10 or so (at least, I did), the Japanese never seem to grow out of cute, fluffy things. The *Tiny Toon* game was only one part of a huge merchandising drive that seemed to have taken over Tokyo while we were there. These *Tiny Toon* characters were everywhere – I saw them appearing on telephones, clocks, toilet-roll holders, night lights and just about everything else you could possibly imagine they could be stuck onto.

Playing *Jungle Wars* from Pony Canyon, a bizarre RPG/*Street Fighter Ii* crossbreed. Sadly not much fun, something you'd have to say about most of the software at the show. New ideas were few and far between.

With the massive interest around *Dragon Quest V* in Japan just breaking at the time, I'd expected the real flood of interest in *Street Fighter II* to be over, but no – there were still loads of people talking about it at the show, with a whole raft of clone games lining up to take advantage of its success. I saw at least 10 at the show, all of which were more or less the same as *SFII* – just not as good. Some did have their distinctive moments, however – one in particular had a brilliant move where you could pick up your opponent and spin him around your head, then flick him out like a wet towel. Men, women, children, babies – all fell before the mighty towel trick.

At first I was rather unimpressed with these clones, but perhaps we shouldn't complain too much. After all, it's the ability of the Japanese to take a successful product and then clone it, while adding some subtle (and sometimes innovative) improvements, that has brought their economy as far as it's come. I know that my own *Populous* has got as many as four clones on various different systems in Japan – which is fine, sort of. Though when you've got so many similar games out there, the mind boggles when you imagine where the people are going to come from to play them all. Most of the *Street Fighter II* clones I saw were so close to the original that it's almost like playing some obscure extra levels of the first game – even the most avid beat-'em-up fan will get bored eventually, surely?

Indeed, there was a bit of a dearth of original new products at the show – rumours were flying around that the interest in computer and video games had perhaps peaked, with Nintendo and Sega being forced to make price cuts to shift products

Left: Comic book of *Zelda III* taken directly from the original storyboards of the game, or so it claimed. They had the actual boards on display too, in a sort of gallery affair. Dotted about the page: *Tiny Toons*, what else?

These two guys were asleep in their van when we went to the show one morning. When we came back they were still there!

reaction amongst the trade people at the show it was clear that the game, a sort of two-player *F-Zero* and rather wonderful, was going to be a roaring success in Japan – as has, indeed, since proven to be the case.

Other games stole some of its limelight, however. Chief amongst these was the rather excellent *Tiny Toons*, from Konami. Tiny Toons are baby versions of normally fully grown American cartoon characters like Mickey Mouse and Bugs Bunny – they're a bit like -chans of Japanese anime characters (*See Anime World, page 20 this issue – Ed.*) and are the latest craze in Japan. The new Super Famicom game based on them certainly caused quite a stir – the way the little 'toons run, and even go into super-speed mode, is very appealing, if reminiscent of

(though the amazing queues for *Dragon Quest V* a month or so later rather put the lie to that). One type of game that was particularly weak at the show was the shoot-'em-up – I only saw one new one, and it was nothing special, except maybe that it was based on Christopher Columbus (!), which makes it topical if nothing else. It wasn't the sort of stuff that's likely to revive the genre.

What else was there? Well, *Super Mario Paint*, Nintendo's paint, animation and sound program designed for young children, was on show. Seems I wasn't the only one who couldn't quite see the point of a paint package on a console at first – where do you save your pictures to? – but this actually, with the help of Mario and his friends, kind of works.

The exciting thing for old Amiga fans is that *Mario Paint* comes packaged with a free mouse – great for me, as all my games have been designed to be controlled with a mouse, and now there's the possibility that we could do this for the Super Nintendo too. Personally, I hate faffing about trying to play something like *Populous* or *Dungeon Master* with a joypad. Over on the Imagineer stand we had both *Populous* and *Powermonger* on the Super Famicom using the mouse, and what a difference it made! I hear things like *Sim Ant* from Maxis are being designed for the Super Famicom mouse too, which is great news as far as I'm concerned.

Left: Shopping on the streets of Tokyo. Many of the streets are pedestrian-only, while all of them are absolutely packed with people. These shops are tiny – many are only big enough to let one customer in at a time. Below: The offices of *LOGIN* magazine, one of the big Japanese games mags. It comes out every two weeks, and is usually about 400 pages. Other big mags include *Famicom Tsushin* and *The Super Famicom*. This is part of the editorial office – they have about 50 journalists working here, which dwarfs any UK mag. The guys at *Super Play* got pretty sick when I showed them these photos, I can tell you!

I've saved the best till last, though. What really made the show for me wasn't a piece of software at all – the only really world class thing being shown there for the first time being *Super Mario Kart* – but the Shoot 'n' Watch. This is a game in the shape of a Super Famicom joypad, with an LCD screen placed at the top. In normal mode it shows the time, but it also has a couple of games on it which you can select – one of which is called *Speed*, and basically consists of you trying to whack the keypad as many times as you can in 10 seconds. At first I could only manage 105 times, but after being challenged by some other developers to beat the 395 they'd achieved I really started to go for it. The best method, I found after much experimentation, is to vibrate your knuckles up and down on the keys as fast as you can. After 50 or so tries I was up to 405 – at which point I realised I'd rubbed all the skin off my knuckles, leaving them looking like I'd been trying to read braille on a cheese grater! (*We'll have more on the Shoot 'n' Watch next month – Ed.*)

Help! We're lost! Me and Geoff Brawn from Maxis, about to get swallowed up in a sea of people. Note McDonalds behind us!

One day we spent on a sort of games conference with various Japanese games designers, chatting about the future of the industry and all sorts. You can see some weird sort of fish here – they all tried to force me to eat it, but I wasn't going to touch the thing. It had hardly been cooked at all – just enough the make the eyes go white – and you were meant to crunch the head too. Ugh!

The thing Les is holding in the other picture is an electronic notepad the waitresses use. They key in your order on this, and it gets beamed right to the kitchen. They can then move straight onto the next table!

After a few hours at the show, all ideas of late night parties and the like went quickly out of the window. The effects of the Hi-pis were slowly wearing off, and as they did so I started to flag badly. By the time the show ended it was all I could do to get back to the hotel in one piece and straight to bed.

SHOPPING IN TOKYO

I spent a couple of days at the show, and one at various meetings and visiting the Japanese magazines. However, the next whole day we'd reserved for shopping – if I could help it, we weren't going to go within two miles of the show. In the event we spent most of the day in a shop called Tokyu Hands – this is eight floors of gadgets, with not a properly useful item in the whole shop! Here you can buy everything from a collapsible toilet (!) to a 5ft working model of ED 209 (the homicidal robot in *Robocop*) – the 5ft model just seemed to wobble about a bit (I think, anyway), but a smaller one would walk around by remote control – a video camera mounted on its arm, instead of a machine gun – photographing your friends!

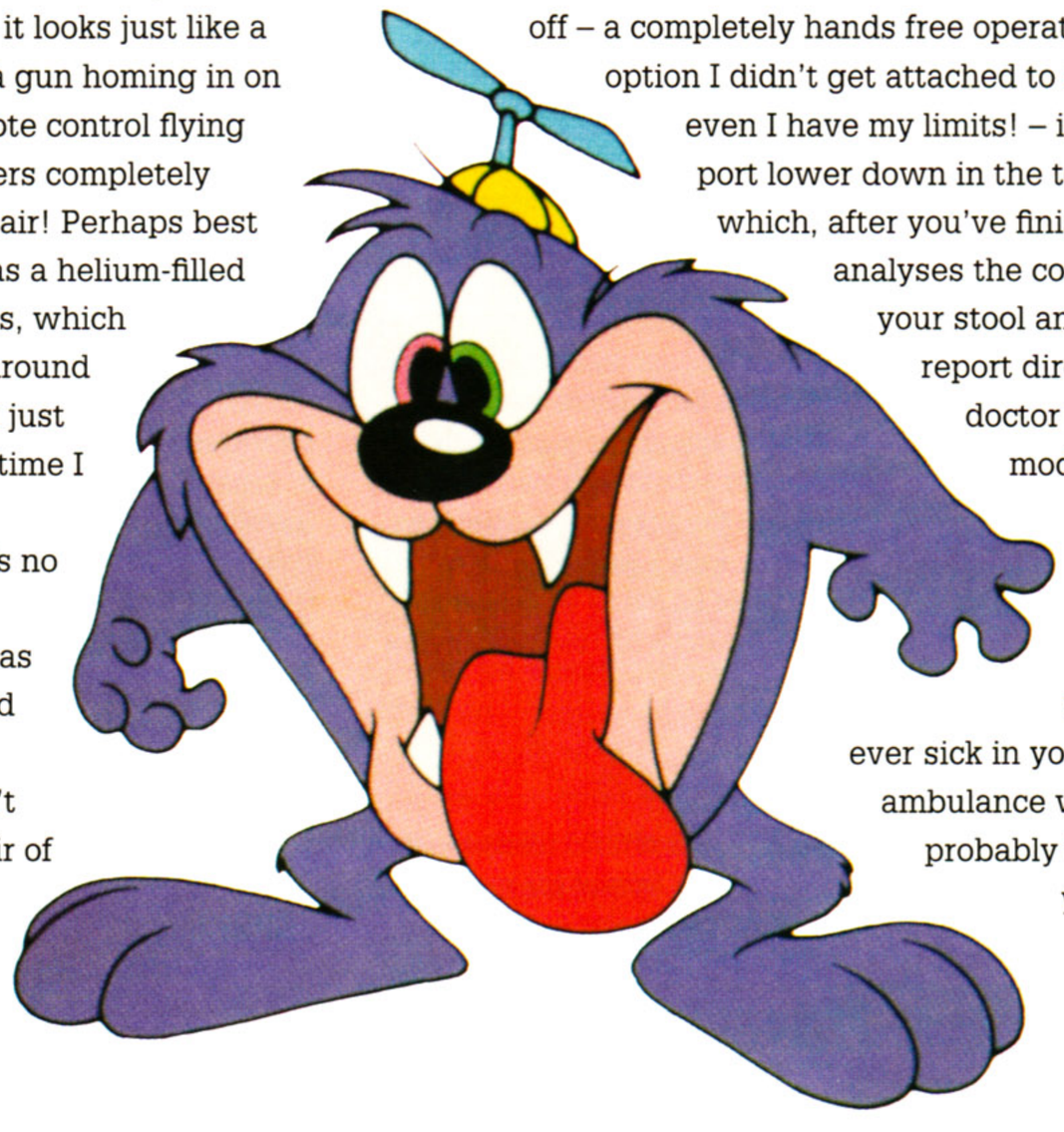
This place was like heaven to me – I bought some great, and incredibly powerful, Japanese fireworks (they don't seem to have heard of safety laws over there), which included a catherine wheel with wings on it. When lit, this flies up into the air like a helicopter, shooting out sparks in all directions,

Sort of clockwise from bottom: Oh dear, oh dear. Les sports one of our rather pathetic samurai wigs, which was going to be an element of a very funny photo shoot. (It was a good idea at the time.); Giant Swiss Army knife cost £500, and needed a special bag to carry it!; Love Hamburgers – who could resist eating there?; Our car, provided for us for the duration of our trip (Not!)

and inevitably homes in on the nearest human! I also got a pack of 3ft x 2ft playing cards, a 3D jigsaw of a French chateau, a nifty laser torch (absolutely great for scaring pedestrians to death, this one – it looks just like a laser sight from a gun homing in on you!), and a remote control flying saucer. This hovers completely stationary in the air! Perhaps best of all, though, was a helium-filled whale with wings, which flapped its way around my living room! I just cracked up each time I saw it, but unfortunately it is no more – one day, while my back was turned, it escaped out of an open window. I haven't seen hide nor hair of the damn thing since.

After Tokyu Hands we went on to an area of Tokyo called Akihabra, which is where most of the city's electronics shops are. It was there I saw – and bought – the electronic, fully remote controlled computerised toilet, which is now installed in pride of place back at home. I bought the top-of-the-range model, which comes equipped with a gender-sensitive probe – when you sit on the toilet a small feeler thing comes out of the seat and wobbles around a bit, determining what sex you are. (If it touches anything hanging down it reasons that you're male, if it doesn't it decides you're female – I'll explain why it needs to know this in a minute.) It also comes with the ability to detect whether you've generated any odours – if so, it turns on its emergency air freshener (which is so loud that anybody else in the house will be able to tell what's going on!).

Then, when you've finished, a simple press of a button will cause a nozzle to come out and give you a wash with warm water – that's why it needed to know what sex you are, as it has a different shaped nozzle for each gender. This is then followed by a blast of warm air to dry you off – a completely hands free operation! One option I didn't get attached to my toilet – even I have my limits! – is a special port lower down in the toilet bowl which, after you've finished, analyses the contents of your stool and sends a report directly to your doctor through a modem link. Imagine what would happen if you were ever sick in your loo – an ambulance would probably turn up at your door 10 minutes later!



And that, pretty much, was my trip to Japan – lots of work, and a little bit of play. The next day we flew home, still in culture shock. I really like Japan – the way it combines the very traditional with the very modern is fascinating, and the people are wonderful. In fact, I can't wait to go again – if only to bring back another helium filled whale!

TOKYO RUMOUR FACTORY

Though exciting new products were pretty thin on the ground, what the show certainly wasn't short of were rumours. There was all sorts of gossip flying around, at least half of which is probably complete rubbish, but here're a couple of the best things we heard...

● New Super Famicom processor imminent!
This one's since been revealed to be perfectly true, and not made up at all. It's been designed by UK games developers Argonaut, and it lets the Super Famicom do super-fast 3D vector stuff – top quality flight sims should now be possible. As it's been designed for games use specifically (unlike the existing processor, which was originally designed for business machines), so many people expect great things. The processor goes inside any cart that needs it (it won't be added to new Super Famicoms), so it'll simply be a case of plug in and go. Don't expect the software to be cheap, though – these carts will cost a lot to manufacture, and that cost will be passed straight on down the line to you. Expect to see the first of them out next year.

● The other major gossip was about inter-machine link ups. These have cropped up before (*See Only In Japan... this month for details – Ed.*), but at least one (quite possibly mad, admittedly) person told me that the Super Famicom was soon to be combined with a Mac, to create a combination games machine/DTP station. Weird...

UK RELEASE PREVIEWS

Your monthly guide to up-coming games on official UK release, listed company by company

ACCLAIM

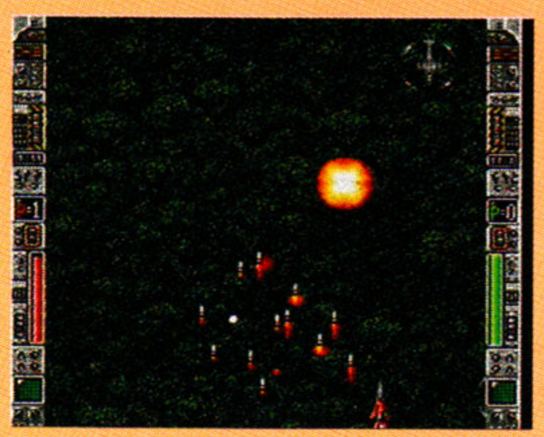
Barts's Nightmare **(reviewed last issue on grey import) will get a UK release this year, as will the Software Creations-developed *Spiderman And The X-Men* game (see separate preview feature) – expect both in December (and a review of *Spidey* next month). *Alien 3* and *Terminator 2* – two big name film licences – are expected in February, with *WWF 2* following on in June or thereabouts.**

ACCOLADE

Test Drive 2 **and *Warpspeed* (see last issue for full previews) are both still on schedule for release around March next year, but plans beyond that are vague – don't expect anything else on Super NES from Accolade before Summer '93 at the earliest.**

ACTIVISION

Two Activision games, *Spindizzy Worlds* (the import version of which is reviewed this month) and *Super Strike Gunner*, are to go on sale in the UK in the second week of November – but only in Woolworths stores! Woolies



Super Strike Gunner from Activision – available in Woolworths (and Woolworths only).

have struck a deal with the now Paris-based software house for exclusive rights to sell these two games in the UK – Woolworths often strike such deals with video companies, record labels and the like – meaning that if you want to buy them, and there isn't a branch handy, you've got a bit of travelling to do. Whether further deals of this nature take place remains to be seen...

ANCO/ IMAGINEER

We all know about *Populous* and *Kick Off* (one reviewed this issue, one reviewed next), but after those the Anco/Imagineer release schedule gets rather vague – we'll keep you posted on the stuff planned for next year as schedules are drawn up.

ELECTRONIC ARTS

EA have eight or so games lined up for next year. After the first couple (*Desert Strike* and *PGA Tour Golf*, both due January-ish) come, a few months later, *NHLAP Hockey '93* and *Road Rash*, followed by the updated *John Madden Football '93*. Other releases haven't yet been named – watch this space.

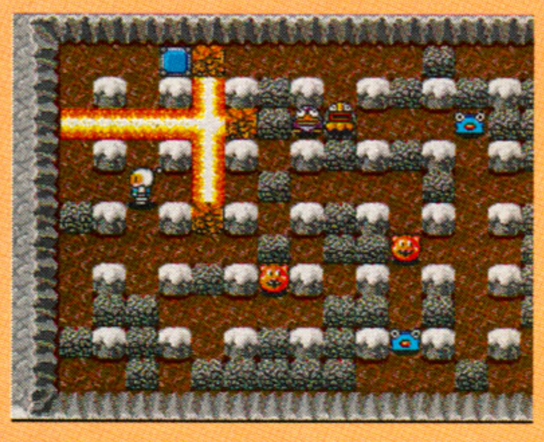
GREMLIN

Nigel Mansell– driving game experts Gremlin go for broke with their first self-published SNES release.

Nigel Mansell's Grand Prix **(a racing game, surprise, surprise) is due for release early next year, with *Utopia* following close behind. Expect to see *Video Kid* published by an as yet unnamed Japanese publisher some time in '93 too.**

HUDSONSOFT

Beyond *Super Adventure Island* (reviewed this issue), Hudsonsoft's line-up is rather on the vague side. There's to be a football game, a two-player racing game, and some sort of role player, but all as yet are un-named. Indeed, the only one we *do* know specifics about is an up-to-five-players-simultaneously (!) action game set in a *Pac-man* type maze. Yes, of course we're talking about *Dynablaster*, the PC Engine hit (under



Dynablaster on the Amiga – the old PC Engine hit will make the SNES next year. Can't wait...

the name *Bomber Man*) which has since spawned a coin-op, various excellent home-computer conversions, and remains simply one of the most playable video games ever. We'll have to wait until early '93 for that one, but believe you us, it'll be worth it.

INFOGRAMES

The major French publisher is dipping its toes into the water Super Nintendo-wise this year with conversions of a handful of its old computer game hits. Look for previews of *Drakkhen* and *Full Metal Planet* elsewhere in Super Express, but this is by no means all from Paris. Expect more next year, including a SNES game based on the recently acquired *Asterix* licence! We'll keep you posted.

INTERPLAY

Interplay now have three games for imminent release. *Another World*, the spectacular Delphine-based arcade adventure (reviewed last issue under its US name *Out Of This World*), will get a UK release this year – we'll keep you updated on when. The other two games, however, won't be with us until '93. They're *Claymates*, which features a blob of blue, well, clay who changes into various creatures to cope with assorted obstacles as the platform

Our hero morphs into a bright blue fish in this underwater scene from the surreal *Claymates*.

game goes on, and *The Lost Vikings* (see separate preview), a three character puzzle/arcade thing. Expect both in the first half of next year.

IREM

Gunforce **(to be reviewed on import next issue) actually gets an official UK release this year though you're unlikely to see it in the shops any earlier than December. Irem's golf game, *Major Title*, should be out by November on import – expect a UK release to follow for that too.**

JALECO

Lots lined up for official release in the UK from Jaleco, fans of the top Japanese arcade game company will be pleased to note. *King Arthur's World*, a medieval *Lemmings*-type romp put together by Argonaut, the team behind *Carrier Command* and *Birds of Prey* on the Amiga, is due for around February, alongside *Super Goal*, a version of the big selling (but unremarkable) NES game *Goal*. A sequel to *Rival Turf* – *Rival Turf 2* – should be with us mid next year.

What you're unlikely to see anything of is *Super EDF* (Earth Defense Force), a rather nifty horizontal blaster (too old), and the baseball game *Bases*

Super EDF – sorry, guys, but this *won't* be getting a UK release. (Best get it on import instead.)

Loaded **– Jaleco doubt there's much of a market for baseball games in this country. We'll keep you posted on details as we learn them.**

JVC

Expect six or seven games from the home entertainment giant over the next six months or so, including *Super Star Wars* (*Star Wars* on the NES was terrific) and – yes! – the seminal RPG

Super Star Wars – coming soon and, from what we've seen, 'Super' is the understatement of the year.

Dungeon Master**, both due in early 1993. Can't wait...**

KONAMI

Consistently one of the best producers of Super Nintendo games, Konami have a whole load of excellent products lined up for official UK release. We've already had *Castlevania IV*, *Super Probotector* and *Turtles IV* – well now expect *Super Parodius*, *Axelay*, *Prince Of Persia* and probably Masiya's *Cybernator* from them too.

MICROPROSE

F-15 Strike Eagle **is still due for Easter or around there next year, with *F-117A* and *Railroad Tycoon* sometime after.**

F-15 Strike Eagle – serious SNES flight sims are thin on the ground, but won't be if MicroProse have any say about it.

Don't expect anything else from Microprose until this time next year though...!

MINDSCAPE

Mindscape's bigger name games won't be ready until next year. True, we get *Chessmaster* (*Hurrah! – Jonathan*) before Christmas, but the likes of *Wing Commander*, the original *Terminator* and *Battletoads* are all '93 releases – and some well into '93 too.

OCEAN

For details on the next batch of Ocean SNES newies, check out the big preview feature on page 8.

PSYGNOSIS

Psygnosis have finally announced the first Super Nintendo products they'll be doing – though they'll be published by Sunsoft, not the UK label. First up is *Super Shadow Of The Beast*, based on the popular Amiga game of the same name. Later we'll see *Puggsy*, a platform game about to be released on the Amiga on Super Nintendo too, but that's way, way into the future.

RENEGADE

Big name creators, big name games: Renegade have a whole series of big Amiga hits lined up for Super NES release over the next six months. From The Bitmap Brothers there's old Amiga hit *Gods* for early next year, and newie *The Chaos Engine* for more like Christmas '93. There's also stuff from Sensible Software and probably Graftgold due at some point, though Renegade aren't confirming dates (or even products.) (Stunning football game *Sensible Soccer* is a dead cert though.)

The Bitmap's *Gods* – a faster, more frantic action game on the Super NES than it ever was on the Amiga.

STORM

Beyond *Super SWIV* (January), the *Lemmings*-like *Troddlers* (Easter) and racing game *Indy Heat* (mid '93), there's film conversion *The Lawnmower Man* – expect to see it towards the end of the Summer of next year.

SYSTEM 3

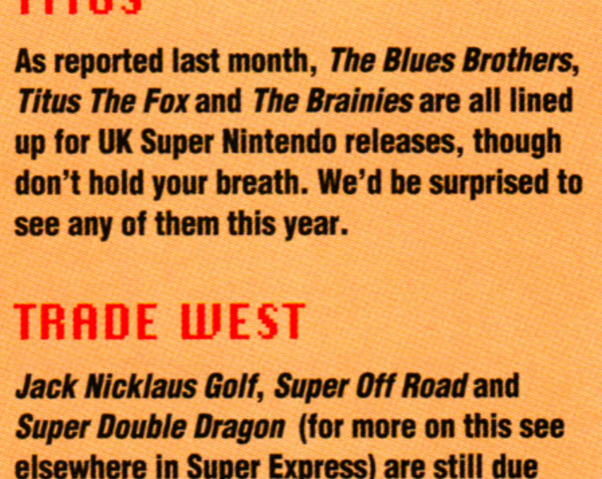
Look out for the generally well-received Amiga games *Myth* and *Putty* to make SNES appearances sometime next year. System 3 don't manage all that many products a year, so don't expect anything else during '93.

TITUS

As reported last month, *The Blues Brothers*, *Titus The Fox* and *The Brainies* are all lined up for UK Super Nintendo releases, though don't hold your breath. We'd be surprised to see any of them this year.

TRADE WEST

***Jack Nicklaus Golf*, *Super Off Road* and *Super Double Dragon* (for more on this see elsewhere in Super Express) are still due this year/early next year – with potential giant-sized hit *Super Battle Toads* some time later on.**



Super Off Road – top overhead(ish) view racing action, featuring bumps, bends and crashes aplenty.

UBI SOFT

Look out for the rather nifty looking (and excellent playing) *Jimmy Connor's Pro Tennis Tour* in February next year, with varous others to follow. *Jimmy Connor's* actually started life as *Pro Tennis Tour* on the Amiga (well, sort of), so many of you may be familiar with the basic structure.

THAT'S ALL FOLKS!

Remember, Code Masters, Core, Domark, US Gold, Empire, Millennium, Mirage and Sierra – along with all the smaller UK-based companies – have either no intention of releasing Super NES products in this country, or are keeping very quiet about it. When they *do* start to do stuff, as will inevitably happen with many of them (keep an eye on Millennium and Mirage particularly), you will, of course, read about it first here in *Super Play*.

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Rampart	call	call
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ANIME WORLD

CUTE TO THE POWER OF INFINITY

Japanese animation – or 'anime' (pronounced 'ah-nee-may') – is incredibly popular in its home country, and gaining fans elsewhere fast. It's from this world that we learn why so many SNES characters have such cute, big eyes. Here's Helen McCarthy...

The Cult of Cute is a major religion in Japan. *Kawaii* is the Japanese word, and Kawaii you'll hear issuing, in various decibels of squeak, from female Japanese throats in shopping malls all over the land, as they seize on something else soft, fluffy, and probably pink. Pink is Cute's main colour, though lavender, pistachio, lemon and lilac all have their place adorning the Deities of Cute – who are generally either underage girls or fluffy animals.

Cuteness is part of the abiding image of Japanese femininity. Oriental girls are sweet, submissive, frothy and, above all else, girly. They giggle a lot. They talk in high, sweet voices. They wear ankle socks with lace edging and put their hair in bunches, usually adorned with pink bobbles. Unfairly, while most Western women over 15 would look absolute prats if they tried this, Japanese girls just look, well, cute. They do this up to the age of 26, regardless of how highly educated and intelligent they are, completely concealing the fact that under this melting exterior lies a core of pure steel strong enough to make Margaret Thatcher look like a Grade A wimp.

'Oriental girls are sweet, submissive, frothy and girly'

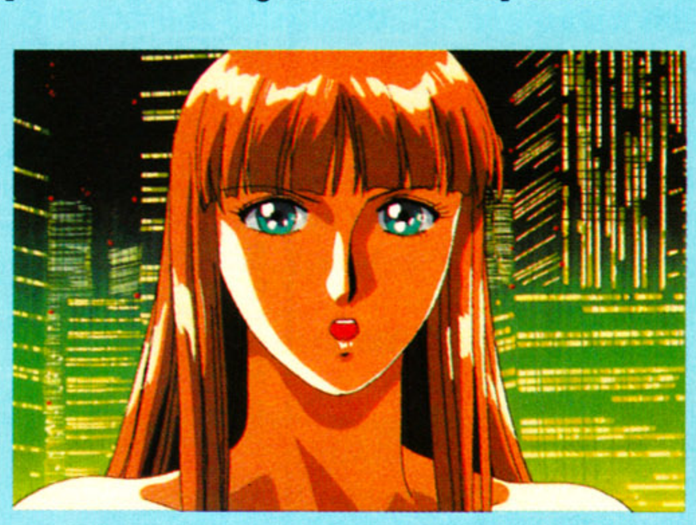
In anime, it started out as Disney's fault. His big-eyed children and fluffy animals were a major influence on the great Osamu Tezuka, the father of the Japanese anime industry, and the other Japanese imitators of the 1950s. Tezuka watched Disney films and the works of the Feischer Brothers in his high school film club, noting how serious concepts and emotions could be put across very effectively by those exaggerated faces and saucer eyes; when his own manga and anime became hits, these influences were transmitted to another generation of Japanese animators, where they retained their power right into the boom years of the '80s.

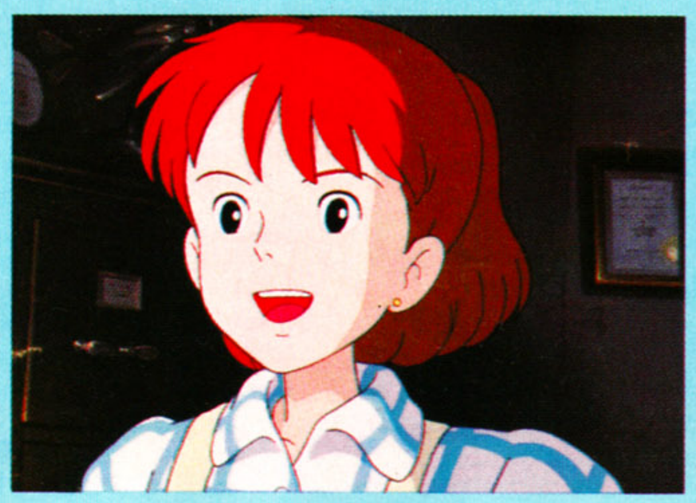
There's also the longstanding tradition that wide eyes and soft faces spell childhood, innocence, helplessness, and appeal to the longing to cherish inherent in adult males and females. Cute isn't threatening; cute needs protection. Make yourself cute and you stir up a whole range of chivalrous instincts. Surround yourself with cute and you enhance this effect. Wielded by devious pre-teen and teenage girls, Cute is a weapon of truly awesome power, as embodied in the blonde and airheaded C-Ko Kotobuki, love-object of the satirical comedy *Project A-ko* and one of the Deities of Cute.

'Cute isn't threatening; cute needs protection'

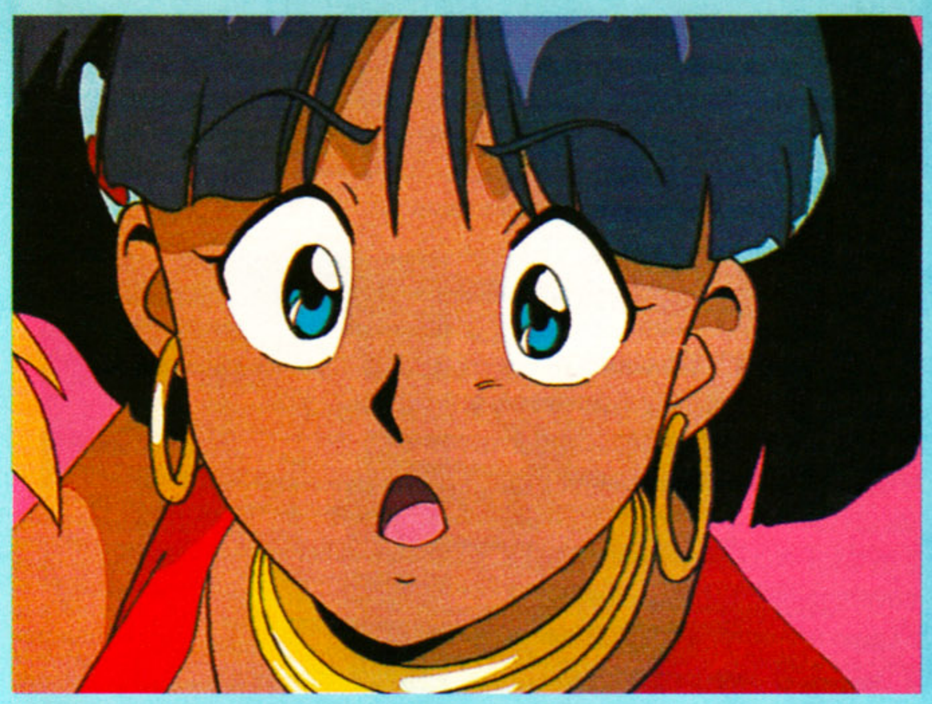
Cute girls abound in anime – lemur eyes, short skirts, ridiculous hairstyles and squeaky voices adorn heroines of all types, from the alien Iczer-1 and human Nagisa of the black fantasy *Fight Iczer-1* to the feisty cop Noa Izumi in *Mobile Police Patlabor*. There's a whole class of programmes, mostly aimed at preteen females, devoted to the adventures of cute princesses with magical powers masquerading as ordinary schoolgirls. In anime for older kids of both sexes, the role is filled by the 'idol-singer' – an utterly gorgeous, nearly-always airheaded *totemo kawaii* (Idol of Cute) who through some strange twist of plot becomes a singing star (thus enabling the lucky production company to merchandise records and CD's alongside their toys).

To take this even further (remember, nobody can develop a marketing concept as thoroughly or in as many directions as a Japanese company) there's the concept of the -chan. -Chan is a Japanese suffix meaning little darling or dear, and is usually added to the names of younger





Above: Boys can be cute too - just check *these* beach bums out.
Top right: A big-eyed 'idol' type, this girl from *Detonator Orgun*.
Right: The young heroine of new hit *Porco Rosso*.



to appear everywhere. The concept even extended to robots. The mighty mecha and fearsome fighting machines of a dozen TV series were transformed into cute little pets for schoolgirls to coo over. Robochans are the ultimate example of the triumph of Cute.

In a way, it's a metaphor for Japanese womanhood. Remember what I said about the core of pure steel? Those sweet little things who will never contradict you and are happy to make your coffee, take your coat and defer to your every wish, are the same sweet little things whose fantasies involve big-eyed, short-skirted heroines kicking hell out of a legion of monsters, and whose bedrooms, pinboards and school pencil-cases are covered in images of robots and warrior princes, safely emasculated into childlike -chans, cute as hell and conforming to the wishes of their dainty little owner.

Which makes the average Western battle heroine look like a pussycat, doesn't it? That's the power of Cute.

Above: So just how big can those eyes get? Right: Fat, thin, boy, girl, human, animal - though girls are best, just about anyone (or thing) can be cute.

siblings, other small children, small animals, or boy/girlfriends – it even crops up in a series title, *Chibi Maruko-Chan*, about the everyday life of a little girl. Making favourite anime characters cute gives them a whole new lease of marketing life.

To make a character into a -chan, you enlarge the head to about one-third body size and shrink the body, rounding it out, making the contours soft and childlike. The face is also rounded and the eyes wider than ever, creating an air of innocence. The idea worked like a dream. -Chan versions of favourite characters started

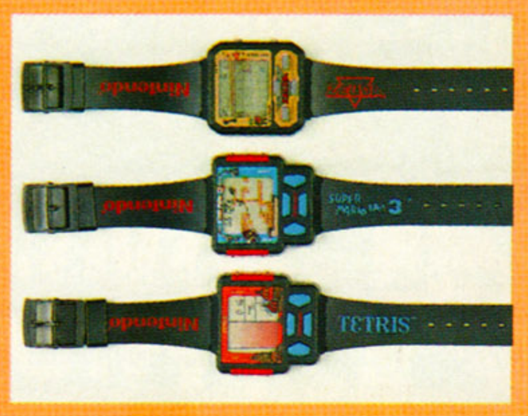
Above: *Minky Momo* - very popular, and very, very cute. Right: And the weird thing is, real Japanese girls go out of their way to be just as sickly sweet as their anime versions. Take this 'idol', for instance...

MERCHANDISE OF THE MONTH

No.1 NINTENDO GAME WATCHES!

IT'S ALL ON THE WRIST!

If a Super Nintendo and a wristwatch were to be struck by a radioactive meteorite from outer space, the result could well look something like this. Not only do these pieces of hardware sit on your wrist looking 'great', but they also tell the time and



Those three watches in full: from top to bottom, *Zelda*, *Super Mario Bros 3* and *Tetris*.

– wait for it – play three top Nintendo games. (Erm, sort of.)

Of the three, the *Tetris* watch is probably your best bet. This is probably the most addictive puzzle game ever, and one which adapts to on-wrist technology quite neatly. This version has been cut down a little from the original – the screen is only six blocks wide – but it plays just as well.

Unfortunately the other two aren't quite so successful. *Super Mario Bros 3* is nothing like the NES game, being played on a single screen that gets repetitive after a while. And *Zelda* is similarly unrelated to its namesake. It just about manages to create the illusion of lots of screens, but the gameplay is restricted to dodging and collecting things. Very poor indeed.

But the point is that, no matter how dodgy the games themselves, you're unlikely to come across a more stylish range of timepieces. They're made by Zeon and sell for around £10 each at any decent toyshop.

IT COULDN'T HAPPEN HERE...

NINTENDO IN COURT: GAMES ARE TOO EXPENSIVE SAY PARENTS

Nintendo is well known for taking legal action to keep control of its marketplace, so here's a turn up for the books – somebody suing Nintendo! Two Californian parents, Toshiro Abbott and Barbara Morse, both with Nintendo-playing sons, are suing the corporation because they think games cost too much – they claim games should sell for around $15, not the $40-$45 currently charged. They are suing on behalf of every other Californian buyer of Nintendo games (!), which means it could get very expensive for Nintendo if they lose...

...OR COULD IT?

MP'S CART PRICE PROBE

Nigel Griffiths, Labour's consumer affairs spokesman, is looking into the whole area of cart pricing, intending to bring the matter up with the Office Of Fair Trading Secretary Michael Heseltine. Questions asked are whether Nintendo and Sega prices are justifiable, and whether or not a monopoly exists. Don't get too excited though – Nintendo's defense (that they sell fewer carts here than the US or Japan, so higher prices are simply down to economies of scale) looks likely to hold.

IT'S CALLED GAMESMASTER (AND IT'S BIG!)

You probably thought *Super Play* was Big. Well, it is, of course. (After all, it's the UK's biggest selling Super Nintendo magazine, which makes it pretty ginormous.) But you ain't really seen Big until you've checked out Future Publishing's exciting new multi-format games magazine.

It's called *GamesMaster*. And, yes, it's the magazine of the TV programme that's watched by 3.5 million people every week. That means that you'll be able to read all about the TV programme in the magazine, and hear Dominic Diamond telling you all about the magazine on the TV show. Great, eh?

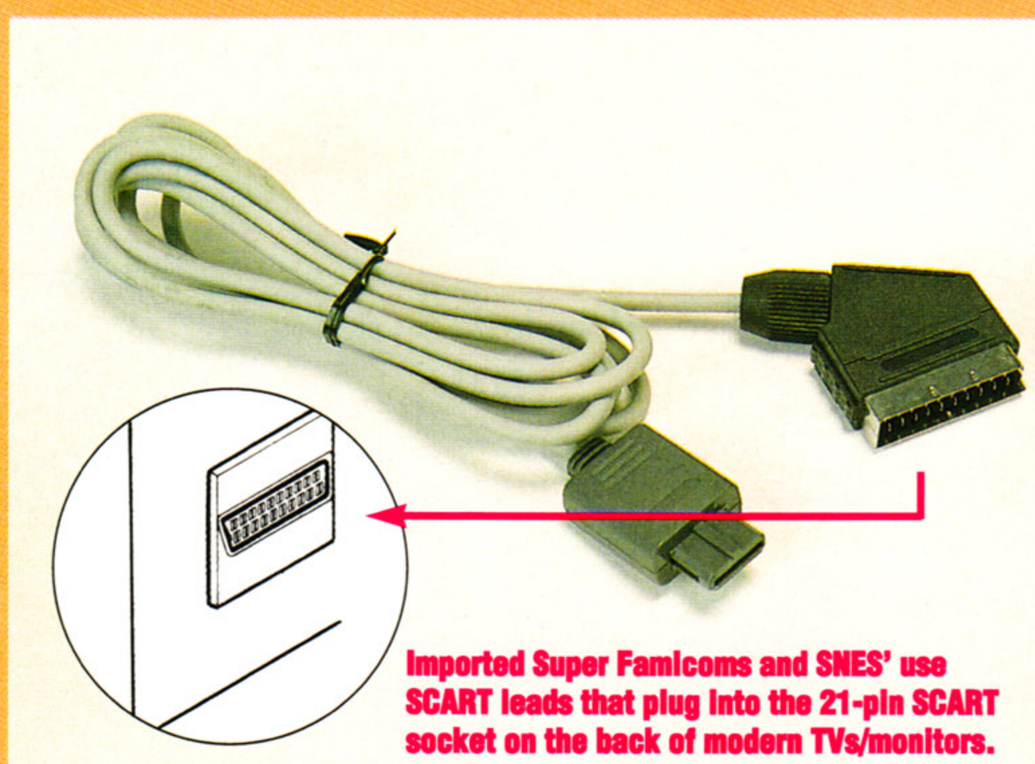
But you haven't heard the half of it. Future Publishing are going to be printing 350,000 copies of *GamesMaster* issue 1. That's more than any other UK games magazine – in fact, it makes it the country's biggest new youth magazine of any type ever. Almost inevitably, this is going to become the UK's best selling games magazine. Forget Big – *GamesMaster* is Huge!

So what's in it for you? Well, there'll be lots of SNES coverage, but being a multi-format mag it'll also feature the Mega Drive and the Amiga, as well as every other top format. It'll have all the usual reviews and previews, plus tips from the GamesMaster himself – including your TV favourites like the Consoletation Zone. The first issue promises to show you what Scuba-girl looks like underneath the wet-suit too! (Whoo, eh?)

Issue 1 goes on sale on 3 December, comes with an incredible free gift, and those 350,000 copies are bound to disappear pretty sharpish. (Impatient fans will be able to pick up a special free preview copy of *GamesMaster* at the Future Entertainment Show at Earls Court. Be there!)

It's Dominic Diamond, presenter of *GamesMaster*, and unchallenged master of the *double entendre*. Watch out for his 'column' (ho ho) in Future Publishing's new *GamesMaster* magazine.

SCART & PAL CONFUSION



Imported Super Famicoms and SNES' use SCART leads that plug into the 21-pin SCART socket on the back of modern TVs/monitors.

THE STORY CONTINUES

We opened up a BIG can of worms last month...

After last month's mammoth Super NES feature – which talked at length about the various advantages imported SCART machines have over UK PAL models – we've been inundated with all kinds of technical enquiries. To set a few minds at rest, then, here are potted answers to some of the most common questions you've been asking us.

SCART PLUGS AND SOCKETS (AND WHAT THEY LOOK LIKE)

It seems the biggest area of confusion concerns SCART sockets and plugs and which ones they actually *are* – sorry, we forgot to include a picture last issue for readers unfamiliar with them. Pictured above is a typical SCART lead – this plugs straight into the back of the Super NES or Super Famicom (in the port marked 'Multi Out') and then into the socket sometimes marked 'Euroconnector' or SCART on the back of a SCART TV or monitor. To check if your TV has a SCART capability, just turn it around and look at the back of it – it's the rectangular 21-pin socket (see pic left). Occasionally imported SCARTmachines are incompatible with some TVs – check with your importer to see if you can return a machine if it is.

CAN YOU BOOST UK CONSOLES TO 60HZ?

The other main question people have been asking is if there's a booster available that speeds up the UK console to 60Hz with a full screen picture. As yet, the answer is no, but that doesn't necessarily mean some sort of booster couldn't work – we'll let you know if anything along those lines appears.

People have also asked if they can get their UK console converted to give the full US/Jap-style SCART picture, or (as suggested in the feature last month) have a switch fitted to disable the modulator. While we thought it might be possible to do, we've since been told that one of the processors in the European SNES is so different to those in imported machines that it either can't be done or would be too much of a job to make it feasible – trying would instantly invalidate your warranty too. Until Nintendo respond by introducing a UK machine capable of running at 60Hz, we're afraid the only way you're going to be able to play Super Nintendo games *exactly* as the creators meant them to be played is by buying an imported machine in the first place.

For more on this, see Gamefreak (page 88) this issue.

SUPER STAR WARS

Lucas Arts

Action, Luke Skywalker-style!

The film might be ancient (15 years old, by our reckoning), but the game's as bang up-to-date as they come – look for the import review of Lucas Arts' new *Star Wars* game next issue, because it's going to be a biggie. The game follows the plot of the film (fairly) closely. Sure, it might be a built-from-lots-of-sub-games film licence – of which we've seen enough poor ones in the past – but this looks like it'll remain quality all the way through. Rarely has a game been so eagerly awaited in the *Super Play* office...

RETURN OF THE DRAGON!

Yep, *Double Dragon* is back! Billy and Jimmy Lee are about to return in an original SNES sequel to the amazingly successful – if rather dated – *Double Dragon* coin-op. To be known in the States as *Super Double Dragon*, and in Japan as *The Return Of Double Dragon*, it should do well purely on the popularity of the previous games. (We don't expect a *Street Fighter II* of it, that's for sure.) The Japanese version has just hit the shops – wait for our review (next ish) before parting with your cash.

Billy and Jimmy – back street fighting, the *Super Double Dragon* way.

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FIRST ADAPTORS TO WORK WITH MARIO KART!

Remember the problems people were having six months ago with the imported *Pilotwings*, trying to play it on UK machines using various universal adaptors and getting pretty much nowhere? The situation has since been cured by the double whammy of a new generation of adaptors and an official release for the game.

However, with the arrival of the great *Super Mario Kart*, something similar has raised its ugly head. Normal adaptors don't work with *Mario Kart* because of interference from the game cart, something created by the way it relates to a UK machine's 50Hz configuration. All of which makes the timing of this European-specific adaptor ideal – it's specifically designed to allow Japanese or American games to run on UK (or French and German) 50Hz hardware, and because of that runs *Super Mario Kart* perfectly! It's marketed by Spellbound and is called the SNES Game Converter (European Version), and ours, which we got from SF Games Services (0925) 861417, cost only £15.95. Datel will soon have an adaptor which runs *Mario Kart* too. Of course, once again the problem is due to become academic quite soon – we expect an official UK release for *Super Mario Kart* shortly...

MICKEY'S MAGICAL QUEST

Slated for a November release, in both Japan and the States, is *Mickey's Magical Quest* from Capcom. Looking even yummier than Sega's excellent *Mickey Mouse* game on the Mega Drive, this seven level platform romp takes Mickey through a wide variety of different landscapes in his search

Right and below: The magic of Capcom's *Mickey Mouse* game.

for Pluto, who's been dognapped by the Evil Emperor Pete! Capcom rarely disappoint, and this should definitely be one to look out for.

Also, keep your eyes open for *Capcom MVP Football*, an impressive looking American football game also due this year, and an RPG called *Breath Of Fire*, which we should see in December. Start brushing up on your Japanese for that one!

12,000 QUEUE FOR NEW GAME IN TOKYO!

(AND THAT'S JUST AT ONE SHOP!)

We've mentioned the incredible popularity of the *Dragon Quest* series in Japan before, but if you ever doubted it, just check this out! On 27 September this year, when the long awaited *Dragon Quest V* eventually hit the streets, there was queuing of a sort that dwarfed recent *Street Fighter II* fever! At the branch of BIC Camera (a big chain of electrical shops) in the Ikebukuro district of Tokyo alone, staff arrived to find a queue of 12,000 (!) people waiting anxiously for the game (see pics) – from start to finish it stretched 5km! On that one day this shop alone sold 30,000 copies – each person who queued buying two or three each. If you imagine this sort of thing all over the country, it's hardly surprising the first production run of 1.3 million copies sold out straight away. Indeed, some shops decided not to sell it on 27 September at all, scared of the chaos it would cause.

To UK gameplayers, who know next to nothing about the series (though check out page 28 onwards for a few more details), this all verges on madness, of course. However, those who've played the games swear by their originality and depth – manga (Japanese comics) artist Akira Toriyama, who designed the complex characters, has become a star in Japan. We'll cover the *Dragon Quest* phenomenon in more detail next issue.

The release of *Dragon Quest V* resulted in these massive queues – many camping out the night before.

MORE SUPER FAMICOM SPECIFIC JOYSTICKS

(But the jury's still out on whether they're worth the dosh...)

XE-1 SFC

by Denpa Simbunsha

The XE-1 SFC – good and solid, very versatile, but slightly odd design.

Last month we reviewed Capcom's Power Stick Fighter – the famous *Street Fighter II* joystick, which gives you the correct controls to play *SFII* exactly as you would in an arcade – and the Apollo Pro Joystick, a less flash, but probably sturdier, *SFII*-style joyboard. The results surprised us – suffice to say, we shed no tears when the Capcom stick went back to the shop we borrowed it from.

Now we've got this one and it's probably the best of the lot. This isn't an unconditional recommendation – the thing is too fussy for its own good. With instructions in Japanese, and hundreds of configurations, using it could be a nightmare for the average gameplayer. However, if you persevere, you'll find it a very versatile game controller – you can make just about any button do anything you like, you can make the joystick do anything you like too (so pushing up makes your spaceship move down, say), and you can watch yourself doing it all on a special LED configuration display at the top of the board! All great fun (but confusing), though we'd prefer a less fashion-conscious and more standard-looking arrangement for the major buttons – the big grey ones on this can be annoying.

Still, a spectacular, and very well made, stick, and one well worth considering by hard bitten joypad haters – the ones who reckon the £80 many importers are charging for these giant joysticks is actually worth the money!

IREM:

TWO NEWIES FOR NEXT MONTH

Innovations in Recreational Entertainment Media – Irem for short – have two new titles scheduled for imminent release. *Gunforce* is their long-awaited conversion of the coin-op of the same name, and smacks of *Contra Spirits*, with two-player simultaneous play and similar blasting action. The pre-release version we saw was unfortunately plagued by slow-down, but we'll reserve our judgement on this one until the *Super Play* review. Also, just available in the States as we went to press, is the US version of their popular coin-op golf game *Major Title*, bizarrely re-titled *The Irem Skins Game*. Again, look for the definitive review in our next issue.

DON'T FORGET

THE FUTURE ENTERTAINMENT SHOW!

If you've bought the mag just as it went on sale you might still have time to go. (And if you've bought it a few days later, and did go – good, wasn't it?) This is, of course, the biggest computer and console show ever staged in this country – every big player in the UK market, including Nintendo, will be there, plus more attractions than we've room here to mention, including live broadcasts from the show on Radio One, and the final of Britain's biggest ever gameplaying competition, with £10,000 prize money!

The Future Entertainment Show is held at Earl's Court in London over the weekend of 5-8 November, from 9.30am-5.00pm (4pm Sunday). It's £7 adults, £5 under 14s – a bargain when you think of how much you could save just buying cheap software there! Phone our hotlines on (051) 356 5085 now, or simply turn up on the day. You won't regret it...

CHARTS ACROSS THE WORLD

Every month we'll run four charts in *Super Play* – the official UK one, based on sales in high street chains, the Import Chart, (sales of US and Jap games in this country, complied by Console Concepts), and two charts from abroad.

OFFICIAL PENGUIN GALLUP UK CHARTS

Compiled for *Super Play* by Gallup

1. **STREET FIGHTER II** Capcom
2. **SUPER WWF WRESTLEMANIA** LJN
3. **SUPER SMASH TV** Acclaim
4. **ZELDA III: A LINK TO THE PAST** Nintendo
5. **KRUSTY'S SUPER FUN HOUSE** Acclaim
6. **SUPER SOCCER** Nintendo
7. **F-ZERO** Nintendo
8. **SUPER TENNIS** Nintendo
9. **TOP GEAR** Nintendo
10. **UN SQUADRON** Capcom

ELSPA PENGUIN CHARTS COMPILED BY GALLUP SPONSORED BY PENGUIN BISCUITS

Surprise, surprise, eh? Guess what's number one (despite costing nearly £65)? Don't expect to see *Street Fighter II* dislodged for a bit, but we do think there'll be a higher position for our cover game, the recently released *Legend Of Zelda*, next issue, as well as placings for *Super Probotector*, *Robocop 3* and *Turtles IV*. Perhaps the most exciting thing of all is the fact that there are now enough games out in the UK to *make* a decent Top 10...

UK IMPORT CHARTS

Compiled for *Super Play* by Console Concepts

1. **STREET FIGHTER II** Capcom (Jap/US)
2. **AXELAY** Konami (Jap/US)
3. **SUPER MARIO KART** Nintendo (Jap/US)
4. **SOUL BLAZER** Enix (US)
5. **SONIC BLAST MAN** Taito (Jap)
6. **IREM SKINS** Irem (US)
7. **NCAA BASKETBALL** Hal America (US)
8. **PRINCE OF PERSIA** NCS Masiya (Jap)
9. **BART'S NIGHTMARE** Acclaim (US)
10. **SUPER ALESTE** Toho/Compile (Jap)

Two new games here we haven't had a chance to review yet, though *NCAA Basketball* is covered in What Cart? under it's Japanese name *Super Dunk Shot*. *Irem Skins* is the other one, known as *Major Title* in Japan – it's a golf game, based on the Irem coin-op *Major Title*. We'll review it next issue – early reports suggest it's the best SNES golf game yet. The rest of the Top 10 is less of a surprise, though *Sonic Blast Man* is doing better than we expected. For reviews of *Axelay*, *Sonic Blast Man* and *Soul Blazer* check out this issue.

JAPANESE CHARTS

Compiled for *Super Play* by Tai Ono

1. **DRAGON'S QUEST V** Enix
2. **SUPER MARIO KART** Nintendo
3. **SUPER GACHAPON WORLD** Yutaka
4. **SUPER MARIO WORLD** Nintendo
5. **STREET FIGHTER II** Capcom
6. **MARIO PAINT** Nintendo
7. **MILITARY BATTLEFIELD** Koei
8. **SD GUNDAM V** Bandai
9. **SUPER MAH JONG COMPETITION** Koei
10. **SUPER MAH JONG** I'Max

Dunno why two *Mah Jong* games have entered the charts so high, but British gameplayer's will be surprised to see last month's number one, *Super Mario Kart*, has been knocked off the top slot – by a game they know next-to-nothing about. *Dragon's Quest V* is the latest in a successful series of excellent NES RPGs that haven't translated well into English in the past. The Japanese market is *not* the same as ours...

AMERICAN CHARTS

Compiled for *Super Play* by Woody Carter

1. **STREET FIGHTER II** Capcom
2. **SUPER MARIO KART** Nintendo
3. **ZELDA III: A LINK TO THE PAST** Nintendo
4. **AXELAY** Konami
5. **SOUL BLAZER** Enix
6. **F-ZERO** Nintendo
7. **FINAL FANTASY 2** Square Soft
8. **NCAA BASKETBALL** Hal America
9. **CASTLEVANIA IV** Konami
10. **CONTRA III** Konami

This makes more sense – the US chart is dominated by the same stuff that's doing well in the UK official and import charts. Following the Dream Team's Olympic success, a high flying basketball game (the US version of *Super Dunk Shot*) isn't a surprise, while the strong performance of *Soul Blazer* proves Americans think the game's as good as Jason says it is. Expect to see a strong showing from *Super Star Wars* too next issue.

SUPERPLAY Interview

JAMES HIGGINS, OCEAN

By Matt Bielby

James Higgins, programmer of both *Addams Family* games, with partners in crime Simon Butler (left) and Warren Lancashire.

Below: The second *Addams Family* game, featuring 'cute' little Pugsley.

CONTINUING OUR SERIES OF SHORT TALKS WITH SOME OF THE WORLD'S TOP SNES DEVELOPERS

James Higgins – a programmer at Ocean on just about every machine from the Spectrum on up – has become one of the country's most successful SNES programmers. Following Ocean's winner *The Addams Family* (see review last issue), he's produced a second *Addams* game (*Pugsley's Scavenger Hunt* – see preview this ish), is now working on an original *Rastan Saga*-style hack-'em-up called *Cold Steel*, and will move onto a CD project for Famicom, Amiga, CDTV and maybe Mega Drive, 'sort of like an ultra-violent cross between *Street Fighter II* and *Contra III*, though not just a rip-off of them.' What movie licence this will be attached to he wouldn't say, though he did come up with plenty of other interesting stuff...

Q How long did *The Addams Family* take to write?

A The first *Addams* we did in about three and a half months, the new one in about four – though normally a game at Ocean will take six months or so. We worked seven days a week, evenings too, to finish them.

Q What're the main differences between the two *Addams Family* games?

A When we started the new game we aimed it at a slightly younger gameplayer, as it was based on the American cartoon show, not the film. The one thing we had in our minds, though, was that the first game was a bit too easy – it was tricky to start with, but wasn't a real challenge. Because of that, we've actually ended up with a tougher game in the new *Addams* – it's not so open-ended, so you have to complete some sections before you can go on to others. It's also quite bloodthirsty, which it's possible Nintendo might object to. They're playtesting the game at the moment. They might not like the washing machine end-of-level boss either – it throws bras and things out at you, which raised a few eyebrows there!

Q What Super Nintendo programmers do you rate?

A Of course *Street Fighter II*'s very well put together, and Nintendo's own teams who did things like *Zelda* and *Mario* are very good. We like most of Capcom's stuff, too – though, of course, there are a lot of very bad games around, mainly shoot-'em-ups and that sort of thing. Have you seen *D Force*? Now that's a dreadful game!

Q Does it worry you trying to compete with companies like Capcom, Nintendo etc, when you see the number of people they assign to each project?

A You can't really think about it. I've heard one reason there are so many people working on those projects is that the folk who do the initial game are great ideas-guys, but very sloppy programmers. What happens is they do the initial program, then a different team takes it over, strips it down, and rewrites it all, making the whole thing actually work. Weird, isn't it?

Q You said the new *Addams* is tougher than the old one. What are some of the other differences?

A Well, the controls are quite different – it's faster, a bit more arcade-like. It's got some great graphics, too. The first *Addams* has just been converted to Mega Drive, and it's lost a bit in the process – this would lose even more. Things like the Crystal Ball effect you couldn't do on any other machine, or the colour layering effect on the bubbles in the bathroom bit. I'd hate to have to do this one on Mega Drive now, that's for sure.

Q What's the SNES like to work on?

A It's a joy. I've worked on so many machines over the years where getting a good parallax scrolling routine's a nightmare, that it's nice now to be able to get three or four levels working in a morning. There is a trade-off of course – sprite handling takes ages, and can be tricky, but when people muck it up now it's normally because they've rushed the game, or because they've structured everything wrong so they're trying to handle too much at once. It's not impossible to get around, basically.

Q What's your dream project? Anything you'd really like to do?

A Everyone working here has a secret desire to do a straight all-action shoot-'em-up, but, of course, when you're always doing licenced products as at Ocean, it tends to be platform games you get instead. When was the last time Ocean did a shoot-'em-up, exactly? Most of our original games are done by outside developers – in-house guys like me go from one big name game to the next. The ideal would be to have as many neat touches as, say, *Parodius*, and the visual appeal of *Super Aleste* with as neat a game design as *R-Type*. If we ever get the *Top Gun 2* licence, or something similar, maybe we'll get a crack at it at last...

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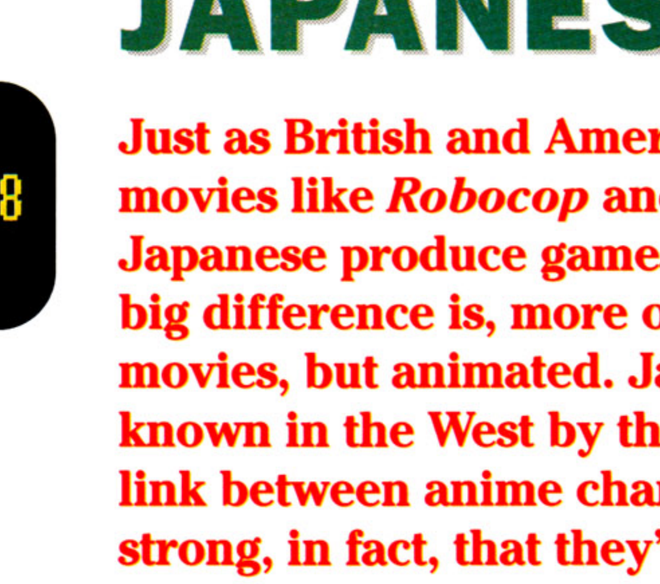
THE ANIME

OR: FILM CONVERSIONS, JAPANESE STYLE

By Wil Overton

Just as British and American games publishers convert big hit movies like *Robocop* and *Terminator* to the Super Nintendo, so the Japanese produce games based on *their* hit films and TV shows. The big difference is, more often than not, that these aren't live action movies, but animated. Japanese animation has a distinctive style, known in the West by the Japanese word for animation, 'anime'. The link between anime characters and Nintendo heroes is strong – so strong, in fact, that they're often the very same people! Here *Super Play* 's Wil Overton takes a close look at some of the best anime-based games, and reviews them alongside their 'parent' films...



Perhaps the most surprising thing, to a British audience, is just how popular animation is with the Japanese. In the West, if you ask someone to name a cartoon, most people will come up with something from Disney, *Tom & Jerry*, the *Flintstones*, *Bugs Bunny* or, just maybe, a certain quartet of ninja amphibians (who, incidently, went down like an open sewer in Japan) – a very limited range of characters. In Japan, however, it's very different. There are simply more animated shows to choose between – ask the same question there and you'll probably get as many answers as people you ask.

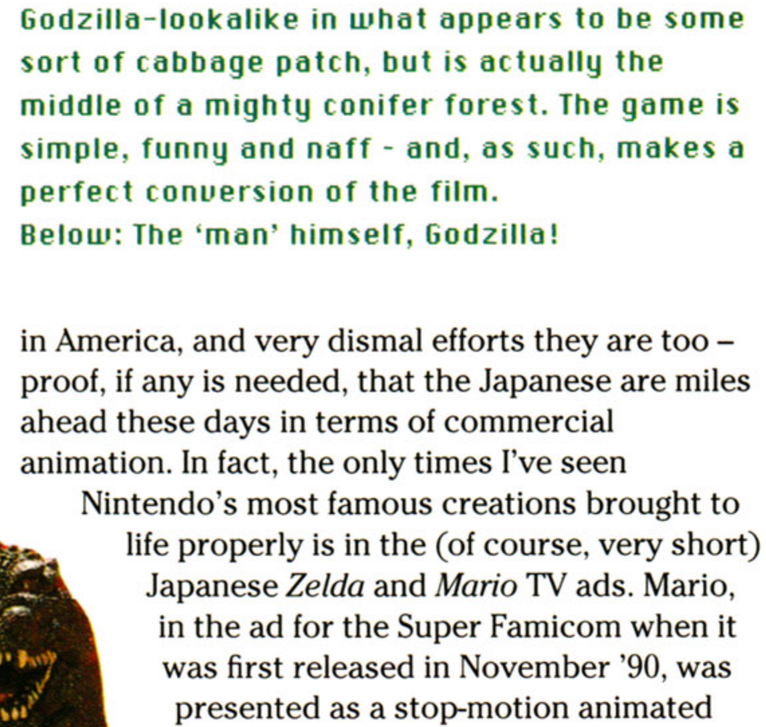
The difference, you see, is that in Japan anything and everything is thought of as a suitable subject for animation – it isn't limited to kiddie stuff like it is here. However, for an overview on how animation relates to Japanese culture, you'd be best checking out Helen McCarthy's regular Anime World column on page 20 – what we're more concerned about in this feature is just how anime films directly cross-fertilise with Japanese games.

Animation is big business in Japan, and an important part of Japanese popular culture, so it's not surprising that programmers and software publishers have turned to it for inspiration, just as Western software publishers turn to the latest cinema blockbuster.

Actually, imagining the link between anime and games over there in terms of the link between films and games over here is only half the story. The link is actually much stronger in Japan – to the extent that a fair number of games have taken the leap the other way and inspired their own anime shows. A show based on the *Dragon's Quest* series of RPGs (*Dragon's Quest V – Bride In The Firmament* was one of the most eagerly awaited games of all time on the Super Famicom, and one of its largest carts yet at 12 Mbit) is running on Japanese TV at the moment, and has proved incredibly popular – in turn spawning everything from pens and sweets to soft toys based on the main characters. (My favourite is something that looks a little like a sentient blue turnip, and delights in the name of 'Slime' – but that's by the by).

Another RPG to make it as anime is *Ys* (*Ys 3 – Wanderers From Ys* was one of the first action/RPGs for the Super Famicom), which has since come out as a series of OAV's (Original Animation Videos – a show that is released straight to tape/laserdisk for rental and/or sell-through) in Japan. It's not just in Japan that Nintendo games spawn their own cartoon shows either – you may have seen tapes of cartoons of *Mario* and *The Legend Of Zelda* for sale over here, but these aren't anime. Instead, they were actually produced in America, and very dismal efforts they are too – proof, if any is needed, that the Japanese are miles ahead these days in terms of commercial animation. In fact, the only times I've seen Nintendo's most famous creations brought to life properly is in the (of course, very short) Japanese *Zelda* and *Mario* TV ads. Mario, in the ad for the Super Famicom when it was first released in November '90, was presented as a stop-motion animated model rock star, while the commerical for *Zelda* was a live-action affair worthy of Michael Jackson's *Thriller*.

Talking of live-action, it's worth noting that not only do the Japanese make great animation, they're no slouches in this department either. Most people will have seen, or at least heard, of Godzilla at one time or another – Channel 4 showed a season of the great rubber dinosaur's films a while back, but the ones they showed were all made in the '50s



Above: Star-born superhero Ultraman tackles a Godzilla-lookalike in what appears to be some sort of cabbage patch, but is actually the middle of a mighty conifer forest. The game is simple, funny and naff - and, as such, makes a perfect conversion of the film.
Below: The 'man' himself, Godzilla!

Uh-oh, looks like Ranma (in male guise, this time) has copped it. Here's one of the lovely anime-style screens from *Ranma 1/2*.

CONNECTION

and '60s (and so were much shoddier than the ones being made today.) Indeed, the eighteenth Godzilla movie – *Godzilla vs Chidorah* – came out in September 1991, and the series shows no signs of stopping there.

Godzilla isn't the only man-in-a-monster-suit who regularly tramples over large models of Tokyo, though. Equally popular in Japan – and familiar to SNES owners – is Ultraman, who appeared in one of the first Famicom beat-'em-ups a while back. Ultraman is something of a national hero in Japan, having appeared in numerous films and TV shows – to the extent that he's spawned a whole Ultra-family to go with him, as well as loads of truly ridiculous-looking Ultra-monsters. We'll look at *Ultraman* (both films and game) a bit later on.

So now you know a little bit about anime, what of the games linked with it? Prepare yourself for, over the next few pages, an in-depth look at the major games directly based on Japanese anime shows, alongside their movie or TV originals. We don't swear it's definitive – with the Super Famicom now the most popular machine in Japan, keeping up with every release is a tough task – but these are the most important ones, and certainly the ones you're most likely to come across in this country. Remember, though, this only scratches the surface of anime's influence on games. Many others you'll be familiar with are directly influenced by anime, in both concept and visual look, even if they're not actually based on an individual show. The influence of animation in Japan is obvious just about everywhere you look.

Above: A couple of friendly faces from the intro sequence to *Ys 3 - Wanderers From Ys*, the first of the series to make it to the Super Nintendo.
Below: Action, *Dragon Ball Z*-style.

One of the stars of *Dragon Ball Z* strikes an aggressive pose. (Hardly surprising, really - in Japan the show is well known for its dedication to ultra-violence.)

ANIME ANSWERS

The most popular questions about Japanese anime (and game characters) answered.

Why does everybody have such huge eyes?
Well, for starters, they don't! It's usually only the hero and/or heroine that have the really big eyes – the bigger the eyes, the more appealing the character. Villains tend to have much smaller eyes, in keeping with their role.

That this convention has developed to such (to Western eyes) ridiculous proportions is usually credited to Osamu Tezuka, who started producing the first Japanese animation after WWII. He was greatly influenced by Disney, and so incorporated the large-eyed look of Mickey Mouse, et al into his characters. Since then, however, the desire for the cutest or most glamorous characters has driven new animators to ever-greater heights – to the extent that to most of the artists working today, who've come into the business over the last 15 years, this is the normal way to draw. (Helen McCarthy gives her explanation to this same question on page 20.)

The three heroes of *Area 88* (*UN Squadron*) prepare for action. The lead character of the TV show is the guy highlighted, Kazama Shin.

Now to the reviews. Below is a list of the major Super Famicom games available in Japan based on anime source material. Reviews of both the games and the films, given together for the very first time, appear over the next few pages...

Area 88
Battle Dodgeball
Captain Tsubasu III
Chibi Maruko-Chan
Dragon Ball Z
Dragon Quest 5
Fire Dodgeball
GPX Cyber Formula
Gundam F-91
Magical Tarutu-Kun **(also known as** ***Magical Guy Adventure*****)**
Ranma 1/2
SD **(Super Deformed)** ***Gundam*** **(There are quite a few of these.)**
Ultraman
Ys III – Wanderers From Ys.

These car crash survivors from *GPX Cyber Formula* don't seem too cut up by the experience - emotionally, at least. The TV show is a light hearted, all action motor racing romp.

AREA 88

By now I think that most Super Famicom/Super NES owners will at least have heard of Capcom's *Area 88*, which appeared in the arcades (and on official SNES release in this country) as *UN Squadron*. You'll know it mainly as a rather excellent – and very pretty – shoot-'em-up, of course, but hang on a minute! Don't those pilots at the start look rather like anime characters? Well of course they do, because they *are* – *Area 88* was both a manga (comic book) and an animated TV series a long time before it got immortalised on a Super Famicom cartridge.

As with the whole *Gundam* thing, *Area 88* (the anime) is a lot more sophisticated and multi-layered than the game that's derived from it. While in the game it's just a matter of shooting lots of baddies and collecting enough money to buy a bigger plane with more weapons, the anime *Area 88* makes a concerted effort to show us the other side of war, the much less glamorous side. The main character, Kazama Shin – the one who looks like he needs his fringe cut! – is a Japanese pilot who, after a reckless night on the bottle, finds he's drunkenly signed up for three years in the Asland

The actual in-game shoot-'em-up that makes up 99.9% of *Area 88* (the game). Not much room for philosophising on the futility of war *here*...

Air Force, a mercenary squad who are based in a place known as Area 88. The story follows Shin's life in Area 88 as he tries to earn $1.5 million in kills, enough to buy his way out and back to Japan and his girlfriend Ryoko. At various points Shin, who quickly becomes the best pilot in the force, almost earns the money, but something always seems to thwart him, keeping him back in Area 88.

Obviously, you'd be hard pushed to fit all of this into a video game, which is why Capcom have done almost exactly what you'd expect them to do, and used the visuals (some very nice character portraits at the start, for instance) and the name to back up a fine (but simple) shoot-'em-up. If nothing else, the *Area 88* name helped shift copies of the game in Japan like nobody's business...

BATTLE DODGEBALL

***Battle Dodgeball*, the game, isn't based directly on any anime series or film at all – instead, it's the second of a whole series of 'Super Deformed' games to come out, the first being *SD Great Battle*. This one, rather than being a *Zelda*-esque romp, is a sort of sports game. You have to chuck the ball at your opponent to try and knock him out. (Hence the 'dodgeball'.)**

What makes this an anime-related game, then, is simply the characters. It takes the *Gundam* mobile suits etc, 'Super Deforms' them (ie shrinks them, translating them

ANIME ANSWERS

Popular anime questions (yes!) answered.

Why are the Japanese so obsessed with robots?

Really, you only have to look at the sort of Japanese exports we get over here to figure that one out – love of high technology! Here, most people over 30 have an in-built fear of even touching a computer keyboard, but in Japan society is much more techno-friendly. That's why you don't see too many super heroes in Japanese anime – even a giant robot has a human pilot. Their fantasy is based on people using technology as tools to enhance themselves, rather than on having some fantastic power bestowed upon them. (And where people do have super-powers, it's usually based on ESP – ie a 'real' super-power, rather than completely impossible super-strength or whatever.) In short, everything's based on the real-world possible – much more than it is in the West.

Fire Dodgeball - the same basic game as *Battle Dodgeball* (like volleyball, however you try to *hit* your opponents) but different characters.

from 'realistic' characters into cute, but slightly naughty, little imps) and then puts them into a game – something that's become fairly common recently, with a whole string of games featuring SD creatures appearing. *Fire Dodgeball*, by the way, is exactly the same game, pretty much, but featuring a different set of anime-style characters.

CHIBI MARUKO-CHAN

Now this is a weird choice for a game if ever there was one – the cartoons aren't action or adventure or anything of the sort, but very simple things which tell the story of the normal, day-to-day life of a seven-year-old Japanese schoolgirl. She gets up, goes to school, meets her friends, and then something really exciting happens – she loses her pencil-case! (Don't worry, she finds it again.)

In fact, this series is incredibly popular in Japan. Fans of the guns'n'girls school of anime will hate it, of course, but millions of Japanese schoolgirls lap it up. It is, quite simply, one of the most popular series of them all. A game was inevitable.

Er, right. So how do you make a game of that? Well, damned if I know. You see, I've seen the game alright, but I haven't the faintest idea what's going on. There're plenty of pretty pictures – our heroine at school, our heroine at home, our heroine on holiday – and there's definitely some puzzle stuff to it, but beyond that I couldn't fathom the game at all. It's very popular, apparantly, but unless you're completely fluent in Japanese you'll get absolutely nothing from this.

Dragon Quest V - the just-released Japanese game has been the most eagerly-awaited release since *Street Fighter II* (see news this month). The TV show's quite popular too.

DRAGON BALL Z

***Dragon Ball Z* is the sequel to an earlier TV show called (surprise!) *Dragon Ball*. The original had lots of very quirky characters and was immensely popular. *Dragon Ball Z* is popular too, but where the original had funny and imaginative storylines, *Z* has fighting, more fighting and yet more fighting. Indeed, sometimes a single fight will go on for quite a few episodes!**

The storyline used to be driven by the quest to find the seven magical 'Dragon Balls' of the title, though now that's been pretty much forgotten – the theme behind the show seems to be the idea of force itself, with ever more powerful heroes fighting ever more powerful aliens. The recent Super Famicom game is an RPG with a combat section built in (now you can organise your own massively long battles!), which uses all the characters from the TV show and seems to stay quite faithful to it. Some of the effects are very impressive, but, as with all Japanese grey import RPGs, an extensive knowledge of the language is essential. For most people, then, *Dragon Ball Z* is really a bit of a non-starter.

Dragon Ball Z - the original plot soon forgotten, to be replaced with (seen here) more fighting!

DRAGON QUEST V

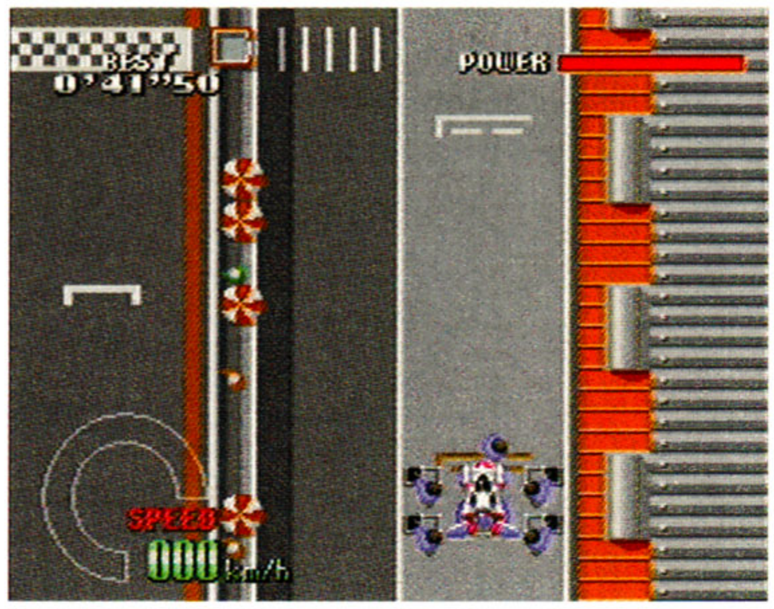
***Dragon Quest* is an incredibly popular series of fantasy role playing games in Japan – as detailed in Super Express this month – the sort of queues these games generate on release put *Street Fighter II* to shame. Indeed, perhaps partly because of the success of this, films and games with 'dragon' in the title have recently become highly popular in Japan.**

The TV series spawned by the games is a high tech sword and sorcery affair. Early series followed the plots of the games closely, but the most recent one shown on Japanese television has differed from what's gone before rather radically, complicating the plot greatly and actually having little really to do with the games at all.

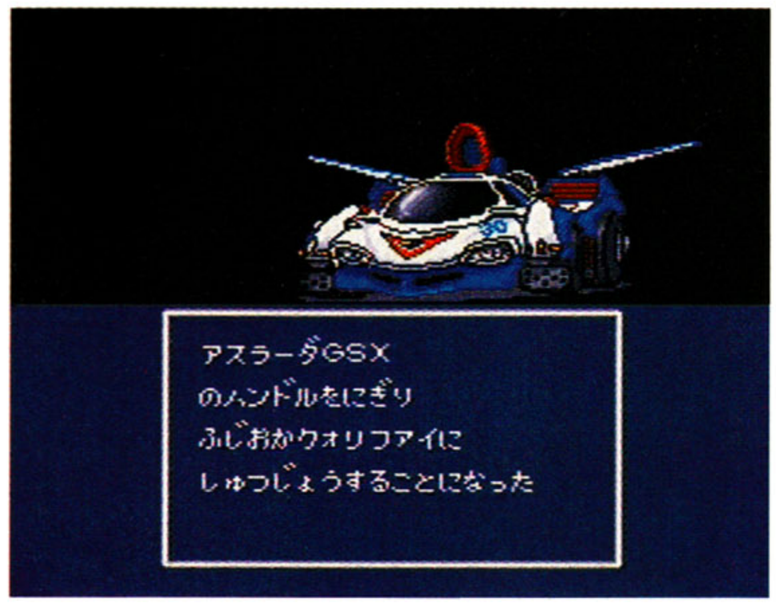
GPX CYBER FORMULA

A series of Saturday afternoon cartoons aimed firmly at older kids, *Cyber Formula* features racing teams of young people in the near future competing in a series of Formula 1-style races. It's a bit basic – very much put together to a formula – and while there's plenty of character interaction (ie the young girl TV reporter fancies the top racing driver, but he doesn't realise it), the racing action still dominates.

Unsurprisingly, the game *GPX Cyber Formula* dumps all the character interaction and plot, and leaves us with a vaguely futuristic overhead view driving game. We talked a bit about this game last issue – it certainly features some stunning (if ridiculous) cars, and an impressive turn of speed, but suffers from the age old overhead driving game problem that the corners are upon you with almost no warning at all, demanding quick reactions from the driver (and not much else). When compared with rivals like *Super F1 Circus* (still not a top-class game by any means), the uninteresting layout of the courses looms large too. A very popular game, and by no means a complete disaster, but to us it's just as far away from being a must-buy.



A pit scene from *GPX Cyber Formula* (the game). The driving sequences use exactly this viewpoint, with a limited number of curves, etc.



Part of the intro sequence to *GPX*, featuring some nice anime-style stills, including these wicked cars, straight out of the TV show.

GUNDAM F-91

To people new to Japanese animation, a *Gundam* film will seem to fit all the preconceptions they had about it – after all, it's full of giant fighting robots, right? Well, yes it is – but equally, just as there is with all types of Japanese animation, there's more to it than that. If anything, the emphasis in *Gundam* is on the characters and their relationships with each other, not on the fighting at all. Indeed, many *Gundam* stories are positively anti-war, showing how innocent people get caught up and hurt in the horror of battle. *Gundam F-91* (*Formula 91*) is the latest big *Gundam* feature to be released in the cinema, although separate *Gundam* stories (*Gundam 0083 – Stardust Memory*) are still coming out as a series of films released straight to video and Laserdisk.

The characters of *F-91*, the version of *Gundam* featured in the game, are completely new – they didn't appear in previous *Gundam* incarnations, with even the main villains changing. The movie, set 40 years after *Stardust Memory*, follows the fortunes of 19-year-

old Seabrook Arno, a student at the Frontier Academy on Frontier IV (a vast rotating space colony, capable of supporting about 25 million people), and tells of what happens to him when the colony is attacked by the Crossbone Vanguard, a bunch of politically unsound bad guys. Seabrook eventually finds himself as the pilot of a brand new type of Mobile Suit (giant robot to you), just developed for the good guys by his scientist mother. This is, of course, the Gundam F-91 of the title.

The film takes many twists and turns, but in the end has little to do with the Super Famicom game which appeared in Japan in 1991, the visual look of the robots aside. Indeed, to be honest it has absolutely nothing to do with it, but Bandai (the game's producers and the largest toy company in Japan) know a good thing when they see it, and they figured the name *Gundam* linked with the new *F-91* film would sell games, no matter what was actually on the cart. They were right – *Gundam F-91* (the game) sold like the proverbial hot-cakes in Japan.

So why are the film and game so different? Well, while the movie is very people-orientated (and just happens to have giant robots in it), the game is basically a robot beat-'em-up with not very many people in it at all. For all its fancy trimmings and film-like intermissions, it all boils down to picking your target (baddie robot) on a map, then fighting it out in an arcade section, chosing different weapons as you go. The game features the new F-91 Gundam Mobile Suit design, as well as a number of the older suits too – you work your way up to an F-91 as you go through the levels. It's not bad fun, truth be told, but I can't help wondering what a more strategy orientated *Gundam* game would be like, using the epic sweep

'Super Deformed' versions of the *Gundam* characters. These three baddies appear in *SD Gundam* - the fighting is very RPG-like in style.

of the anime series to produce a more war-game orientated release. As it is, I think *Gundam F-91* (the game) would have sunk without a trace if it weren't for the anime connection – that it didn't just proves how incredibly popular *Gundam* really is.

MAGICAL TALRUTO-KUN (MAGICAL GUY ADVENTURE)

This show used to go out at 8.30 on a Sunday morning, so you'd naturally expect it to be for kids – and you'd be right. That said, though, how many kids cartoons have episodes where one of the main characters suspects his dad of cheating on his mum with another girl? Not many in the West, that's for sure...

The story of this one is actually all about a very young wizard – short, fat, very cute – who lives with a young boy in modern Japan. There's also a girl wizard (short, fat, even cuter) knocking about the place, plus an evil wizard who's got the hots for her and is insanely jealous of Talruto-kun (the good wizard), as she's his girlfriend. Add to this the fact that all the girls at the boy's school seem to be very well developed for their age (I think they're only meant to be 12 or 13, but certainly don't look it) and you've got one very bizarre show.

The Super Famicom game based on it – advertised over here as *Magical Guy Adventure* – is a platform game with all the usual elements (end-of-level bosses etc), drawn in a very cute style which captures the bright, colourful look of Talruto perfectly. The way he uses his giant, frog-like tongue to eat things he comes across gives the game a surreal, slightly queasy feel. You lick your enemies to death too, and occasionally the whole

The cute wizard hero of *Magical Talruto-Kun*, (sans giant tongue).

Above: Giant *Gundam* robot, one that's definitely *not* been 'Super Deformed' into a cute little toy. To scale, a human would reach up to about his ankle - the pilot controls it from a cockpit positioned in the head or upper chest.
Above right: Talruto-Kun licks his way to victory.
Right: Talruto's wizard girl looks a bit miffed.

thing turns into a card game a fruit machine sub-level for no good reason. This is one to show to your friends as an example of how weird the Japanese are, if nothing else.

RANMA 1/2

This show is incredibly popular, and still running on TV at the moment. Its creator, Rumiko Takahashi, is one of the five wealthiest women in Japan, and seems to have a magical touch with everything she produces. Most of her stories have the same central theme, that of love and relationships, but the characters and plot twists are what really bring them to life.

Remember Ranma looking beaten a few pages back? Here's what happened just seconds before: Ranma's dad knocked him on his back, then turned into a panda to celebrate. Weird!

Ranma 1/2 is the story of a boy (Ranma) who, after a journey through China with his father, returns home to Japan and is told that they are to go to the house of an old family friend (Mr Tendo), where Ranma is to be married to one of Mr Tendo's three daughters. However (and here's the twist), when they arrive at Mr Tendo's house, things don't seem to be quite right. Ranma's dad now seems to be a rather large panda, and Ranma himself appears, to all intents and purposes, to be a girl! Things get even more confused when Akane – the youngest of the three daughters and now the prime marriage prospect, having been 'volunteered' by the other two – discovers Ranma taking a bath, and is surprised to find he's now got all his boy's bits and pieces back again!

The explanation is as convoluted as you'd expect. It seems that during their trip through China, Ranma and his father fell foul of a series of cursed pools. During a sparring match one day next to these small ponds (everyone in the show seems to love a good fight), Ranma is doused in a pool in which a young girl once drowned, and his father falls into (you guessed it) one where the same fate befell a giant panda. Now the situation is that when either of them are covered in cold water, the transformation takes place. Hot water (very hot, actually), turns them back to their real selves. And you thought you had problems...

Still, if you think that's weird, how does the fact that Mr Tendo isn't phased at all by this development – and still wants Ranma to marry his daughter – grab you? The whole thing turns into a bizarre farce, with all sorts of complications and – as you might expect – much water flying about. Later in the series other characters, all of whom seem to have taken the same trip across China, and all of whom also managed to fall into cursed pools somewhere *en route*, appear – making the love lives of everyone concerned much more complicated!

Top: A cute Ultraman leaps across a series of floating islands in *SD Great Battle*. Right: An equally cute Gundam mobile suit makes like Chun Li in *Last Fighter Twin*.

The question now has to be, 'How on earth can you fit all that into a video game?' Well, as I said, most of the characters in *Ranma* seem well versed in the martial arts, and will fight each other at the drop of a hat, so much scrapping goes on. Thus the game is, to all intents and purposes, a beat-'em-up – just one with the weirdest background you've ever seen. To best appreciate the TV shows (especially), but also the game, you really need to know a fair amount about Japanese ideas of honour and not losing face – much of *Ranma 1/2* is a mickey-take of these sorts of social graces. To the average Westerner, who doesn't know the first thing about this sort of stuff, it just comes across as very odd indeed...

SUPER DEFORMED GUNDAM

They're small, they're cute, and they account for a rather large proportion of anime-connected Super Famicom games. So come on down, Super Deformed characters! 'Super Deforming' an existing anime character is something of a tradition in Japan. Originally it would be done by someone other than the original series creators as a sort of wicked parody, but now the squishing down and cutifying is done 'officially' (and rather less viciously) – and often proves just as popular as the real thing! (Indeed, the whole Super Deformed phenomenon is now happening to video games too – what is *Parodius*, if not a Super Deformed version of *Gradius*, after all?)

The most famous (infamous?) and popular of all SD characters is SD Gundam, with the cute little Mobile Suit appearing in loads of different guises, from a medieval knight version to the army combat 'G-Arms' series. So popular is SD Gundam that he probably appears more often than his big brother, with his own anime series, comics, model kits and – yes! – video games.

Indeed, there are quite a few different Super Famicom carts bearing the *SD Gundam* name, and carrying the *Gundam* characters. The role playing games usually feature just Gundam, but when he's dropped into a more arcade/action format he's more often than not joined by other SD characters from different shows. A prime example of this is in the game *Battle Dodgeball,* a sort of future sport where you throw the ball at the opposing team in an effort to (literally) knock them out of the game. (See the separate entry on page 30). All the teams are made up of Super Deformed characters, including SD Ultraman and his entourage of SD Ultra-monsters, as well as SD Kamen Riders alongside SD Gundam. Interestingly, both Ultraman and the Kamen Riders are live action characters who only appear in animated form when they're in their SD states – sort of like the *Muppet Babies* cartoon characters.

Last Fighter Twin is another similar game, this one featuring a little Gundam suit fighting assorted similarly Super Deformed monsters in a bizarre variation on the *Final Fight* theme.

Beyond the cute characters, there's often little connection between the anime SD shows and the video games – indeed, using *Gundam*-derived figures at all is really just an excuse to see some great little characters, and nothing to do with the actual gameplay at all. (And, of course, attaching the *Gundam* name does nothing to harm the Japanese sales of a game at all...)

ULTRAMAN

Ignore the poor American-produced cartoon series, and go for the wondeful Japanese live action stuff instead. These films, the originals, are great fun – a giant alien from another planet (soon joined in the films by a whole family of similar beings) comes to Earth to fight for justice, normally

Is there *anything* cuter than these little Gundams dressed up as samurai? We doubt it.

against a series of other earth or alien spawned giant monsters. The films exhibit strong morals (the alien normally meets a group of young Japanese and teaches them an important lesson or two), but that doesn't stop hundreds of acres of land being devastated in each one. Imagine a more human Godzilla and you'll be about there.

Of course, the game reduces things still further into a crazy, arcade-style beat-'em-up featuring Ultraman himself facing a series of ever-more-bizarre baddies. At first it looks like two weirdly-dressed blokes fighting in a cabbage patch, but then you realise – they're actually over 100 feet tall, and the 'cabbages' are really a forest around their feet! It's quite a laugh for a while, and there's actually a reasonable amount of gameplay potential to it, but (like the films) it's more 'so bad it's good' than actually good by any normal use of the term.

Look out, also for games featuring a Super Deformed Ultraman – *SD Great Battle,* a cute wandering-around-fighting-various-monsters game is probably the most famous.

YS III – WANDERERS FROM YS

A big series of fantasy role playing stories which have gathered a lot of attention in Japan. The games came first, of course, starting on CD for the PC Engine in Japan and, later, America – the only one available on cartridge for the Super Nintendo, so far, is *Ys III*. If you imagine a slightly smaller scale, less well presented *Zelda* you'll have some idea of the look of the games (though that won't prepare you for the absolutely gorgeous static graphics that crop up from time to time) – there's a lot to them, and if FRP stuff is your bag they come recommended.

The animation series followed later. These films are released straight to sell-through video in Japan, without being shown on TV first – which is normally a guarantee of a fairly high standard of animation, as indeed proves to be the case here. Plots, characters and so on, however, are very standard fare.

ANIME CONTACT

Getting more information on Japanese animation ain't easy, but it ain't impossible either. Try these:

Manga Video

An imprint of Island Video, Manga are now packaging some of the best of Japanese anime for a UK audience. There are currently seven tapes available – *Akira*, *Fist of The North Star*, two volumes of *Dominion: Tank Police*, *Project A-Ko*, *Odin* and *Venus Wars* – with more to follow. (The borderline pornographic and almost unclassifiable *Legend Of The Overfiend* is one promised!). For details of future releases, and the Manga fan club (which could be worth joining), write to them at The Manga Club, 40 St Peters Road, London W6 9BD.

Anime UK

Getting hold of most of the anime films which have Super Nintendo games related to them can be difficult. *Anime UK*, the magazine edited by *Super Play*'s very own Helen McCarthy, is one place to look, not only to keep you up-to-date on what's big in Japan at the moment, but also to steer you in the direction of where you might be able to get the obscure stuff. It's bi-monthly, costs £3.50 from good comic and science fiction shops, though you can send an sae to the publishers at 70 Mortimer St, London W1 for more details.

Above: An in-game screen from *Ys III* - like *Zelda* but, er, different. Below: Those *Cyber Formula* boys - lookin' the way the like, an' likin' the way they look!

Behind you! The *Ys* heroes learn it ain't wise to turn your back on *anyone* when your an RPG hero. One of the ace still screens from the game.

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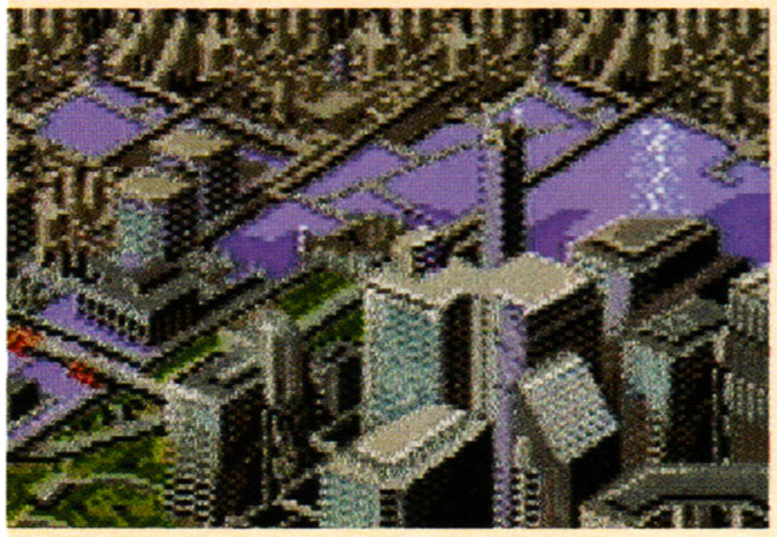
AXELAY

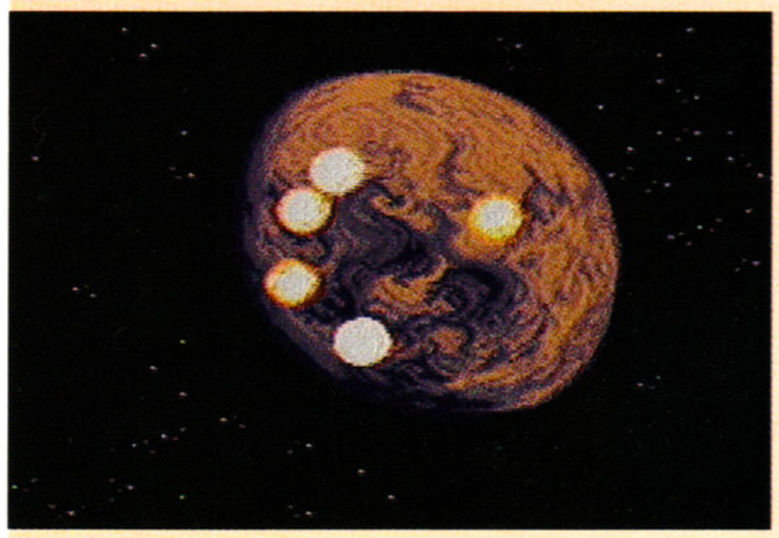
Japanese/US Release

Game: Axelay
Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami in-house
Price: Approx. £45
Release: Out now
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

The Super Nintendo can do lots of things. It can do smooth, parallax scrolling. It can do hundreds of sprites at once. It can do massive end-of-level baddies. It can do devastating explosions. It can do great music. You'll find all this in *Axelay*. But, even so, is it any fun to play?



Alien attack on Earth horror! Giant spaceships rumble overhead, sweeping the ground with their death rays. Cities crumble. Seas evaporate. People run around screaming a lot.



All appears to be lost. The Earth is devastated, its population all but exterminated by the dastardly aliens. There's only one survivor: you (obviously). Come on – after them!

Yikes! We appear to be surrounded by a ring of baddies – a ring that's shrinking fast. A mere laser cannon isn't going to be enough to kill them all, so now what are we going to do?

Luckily, pressing the R button switches to our 360 degree 'Round Vulcan' gun thing, careful use of which will zap all the baddies while they're still at a safe distance. (Phew.)

LEVEL ONE

The first level begins peacefully enough. Just a few formations of weedy aliens, giving you a chance to get to grips with *Axelay*'s slightly fiddly weapons system.

But, er, it soon gets harder. Here we've just been struck by one very large spaceship, followed by three slightly smaller ones. (Drat, drat and double drat.)

LEVEL TWO

Level two sees us flip into a more familiar horizontally scrolling posture. (*Axelay* alternates between the horizontal and the vertical for every one of its six levels.)

Here we are sneaking into an enemy space station. (Although, the chances are that massive fireball we've just launched will set off their sprinkler system and bring 'em running.)

LEVEL THREE

Back into 3D mode, and things are looking pretty quiet. Dull, almost. Just a couple of long-armed, spinning around spaceships and lots of sand. But then...

Yee-argh! The ground drops away to reveal that we're actually thousands of feet above a vast city. If you gasped at level one, level three will have you gulping like a halibut.

If you thought Mode 7 was limited to just doing spinny, zoomy-in-and-outy things, take a peek at *Axelay*'s vertically scrolling sections. They feature what's probably the most impressive 3D effect in video games history. It looks a bit weird at first, but impresses the hell out of passers-by.

SELECTING YOUR FIREPOWER

Axelay does most things a little differently, and its weapons systems are no exception. It's all a bit complicated, unfortunately, so listen carefully.

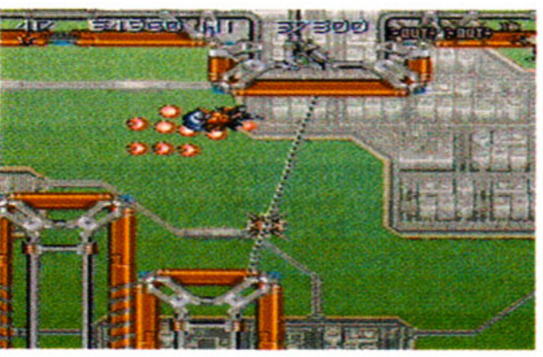
First, at the beginning of each level, you're presented with this Weapons Select screen. You can choose three weapons from a choice that widens as you progress through the game. Along with each one comes a neat diagram of how the weapon works, and its effects on the enemy.

Once the level's underway, you can flick between the three weapons using the L and R buttons on your controller. (You won't find yourself bothering much, but it's nice to have the choice.) However, if you get hit by a baddy, the weapon you're currently using disappears. Once you've lost all three you're left with a rubbishy laser cannon, and if you get hit again you lose a life.

Having dusted ourselves off, we come face to face with large, floating rocks, bristling with guns. (It's a shame you can't do parallax scrolling in a mag, or you could see just how fab these are.)

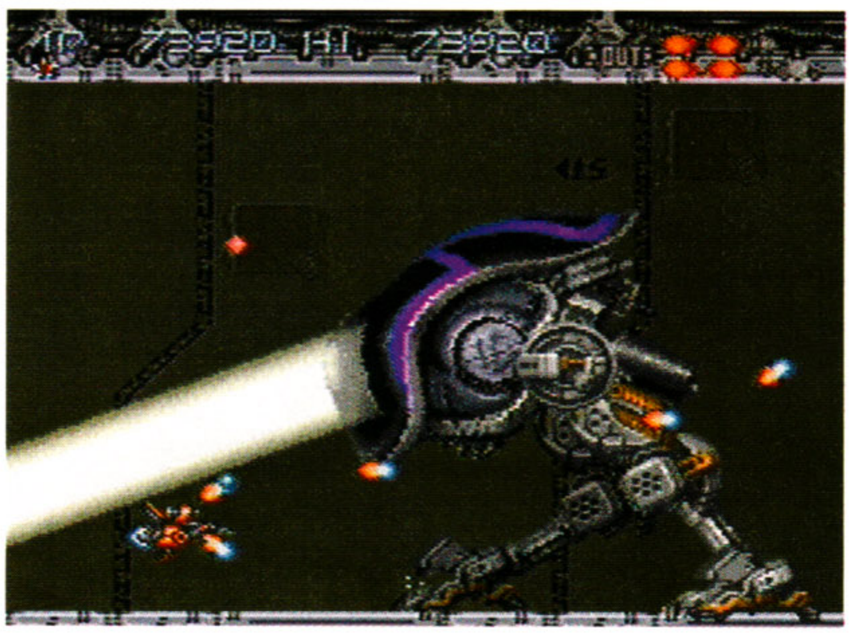
Our prospects look gloomier and gloomier as we head into this jungle of levitating rock. That purple stuff wants to be shot out of the way. Watch out, too, for stray rock fragments.

Yikes – a terrifying, giant, robotic spider with three lines of defence up its (eight) sleeves:
- machine guns
- webs that ensnare you
- little baby spiders that pop out and also attack you.

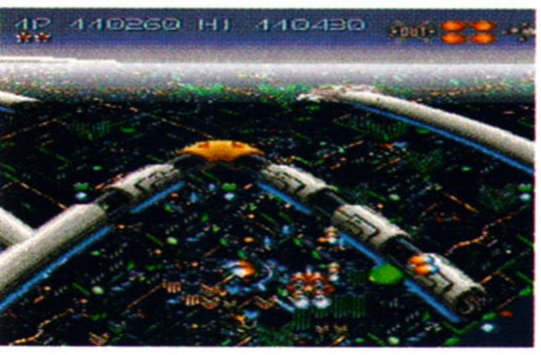


Those rope things can only be removed by shooting the blobs that scuttle up and down them. (Unless you've just lost all your weapons, like us. Damn, damn, damn.)

What a view to wake up to every morning, huh? This bit's easy enough – just down those large baddies that float towards you and dodge all the bullets. No problem!



Here's one of *Axelay*'s finest end-of-level guardians. It's superb. It:
- walks like an ED-209-type thing
- fires at you with its massive great machine gun
- blasts you with that powerful light ray.



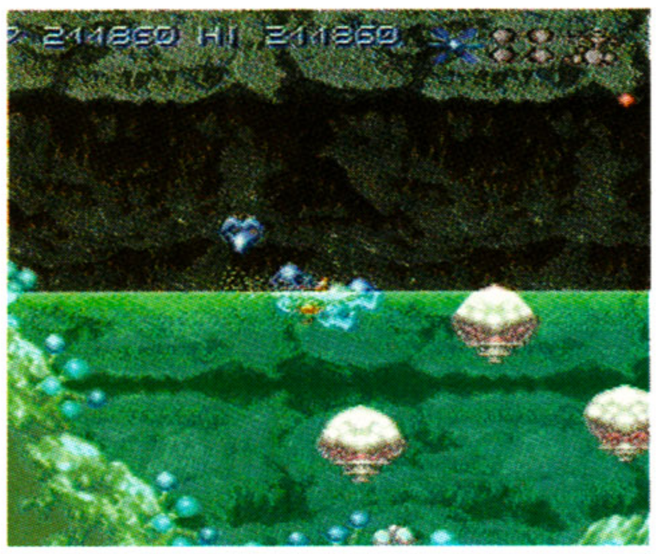
They obviously heard we were coming, and set up this network of metal pipes. Shoot the gold sections and they'll tumble back to earth, letting you nip swiftly through the gap.

Here we are back within a reasonable distance of terra firma again, and... Blam! (Damn, damn, damn, damn, damn, damn!)

The end-of-level guardian is a bizarre witch's hat thingy. It:
- spins round
- fires at you
- suddenly, just when you think you've killed it off, mutates into the armour-plated red thing that you see here.

FIRE MONSTER

Every one of *Axelay*'s end-of-level guardians is a work of art. The ED-209 thing at the end of level two is an absolute stonker, but, for our money, level five's takes the biscuit. We normally wouldn't ruin your fun by printing pics from later levels but... well, just look at him, eh? Isn't he gorgeous?



Look, sorry about this, but we just had to show you this bit from level four. Doesn't *Axelay* look great as it skims across the surface of the water? (Or it would if it didn't have face-huggers stuck all over it – they attach themselves to the ship and weigh it down.)

You want big motherships, like in *R-Type*? Then take a look at these ones, from, er, level six. (Sorry). They glide about effortlessly, letting you dodge between them, shooting off their various appendages.

Well, seeing as we've already spoiled level five by showing you its boss, here are the fabulous worms that jump out of the fiery sea, scare the pants off you and then disappear beneath the waves again. They're a bit like something out of *Dune*. (Only there aren't any dunes.)

WARNING!

***Axelay* can come a cropper when running on a UK machine through an adaptor. Namely, the graphics on level two go a bit weird (although gameplay doesn't seem to be affected).**

GOOD, BAD OR UGLY?

Axelay, eh? Not a phrase that trips easily off the tongue, but the only one that seems sufficient to convey the feeling of awe one inevitably feels during one's first go on the game. The graphics really are that good. (More on them later.)

If there's one thing that makes *Axelay* stand head and shoulders above it's shoot-'em-up rivals (apart from the graphics), it's the rampant, untamed imagination that's gone into creating it. At least half of the baddies you'll encounter are brand new, while the rest are all elaborate variations on the cream of ordinary baddies. You want examples? (Damn.) Er, well how about the horrible tripod things that crawl out from holes in the ground and start shooting at you? Or the gigantic worms on level five? Or the clapperboard ones? Or the spiky things that explode into hundreds of homing missiles? Or the face-huggers that latch onto your ship and make it go all heavy? Or the underwater monkeys, clutching large, indestructible eggs? Or... (*Enough! – Ed.*) And, of course, there are the end-of-level guardians. You simply won't find better. The music and sound effects are great, too. While level one's tune is the only one really hummable, there are lots of great touches, like the sirens that herald the bosses, which makes for a constant air of excitement.

Erm, the graphics, then. The problem here, of course, is that on paper they don't look even a twentieth as good as they do on-screen. Even as I was pausing the game to take the pictures I was thinking: 'Oh no! What on earth are people going to think?' This is one occasion where, although a picture may well paint 1,000 words, most of them are hopelessly wrong.

You can imagine what the horizontally-scrolling levels look like. They're basically as good as it's possible for this sort of thing to be – smooth, action-packed and fast. (There's no slow-down at all, practically).

What's rather trickier to get across is how amazing the 3D levels look. This is an effect that's never been seen before – the landscape rolling towards you, only rather than being all flat as in *Pilotwings* or *F-Zero*, it uses two or three levels of parallax to create a real impression of depth. It does look weird the way things are distorted like they're wrapped around a cylinder, but it's still brilliant. Nope, I'm afraid you're just going to have to buy the cart to see what I'm on about.

The only problem I can see with the game is that, while *Axelay*'s fabulous, it's not one I think that can be given an unquestionable 100% across the board recommendation to everyone. The snag is that there are only the six levels – really good levels, mind – and they're all a bit short. Plus, they're not very difficult to get through once you've sussed out the weapons system. There aren't really any strategic-type bits – if you make sure you've got the right weapon for the job, it's just a case of zapping everything. So shoot-'em-up experts should have this one finished in no time. (Mind you, *Parodius* – also from Konami – suffers from the same problem, and that's one of our office faves.)

Littleness aside, though, there are still three very good reasons for buying *Axelay*:

- It's the sort of game that's so enjoyable, so imaginative, and so crammed with detail that, even if you manage to complete it on your third go, you'll probably carry on and play through it another six times.
- It's got the best graphics of any game, on any system. Ever. (Would you really be able to sleep at night knowing that you hadn't got the game with the best graphics ever?)
- After seeing it, your friends will be so gobsmacked they'll immediately rush out and buy Super Nintendos of their own. Then you'll be able borrow all their games and stuff.

And so we come to the bit where I round things off by saying that *Axelay* looks fantastic, sounds brilliant and plays quite well, but not as well as the graphics might lead you to believe. I also find myself having to say something along the lines of 'make your own mind up'. I personally would feel pretty chuffed having just splashed out on this, but I appreciate that some people might feel slightly disappointed with the lack of gameplay.

● Jonathan Davies

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
94%	90%	85%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
79%	85%	

VERDICT: Graphically awesome. But even *Axelay*'s greatest fans will have to admit that, gameplaywise, the whole thing is just a little thin. A really nice game to have, though.

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RAMPART

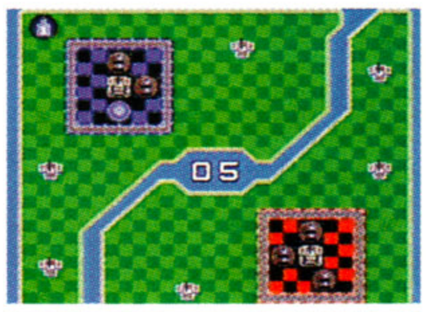
US Release

Game: Rampart
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Bitmaster
Price: Approx. £45
Release: Out now
Players: 1 or 2
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

Cover up the rest of the page, and try to imagine a cross between *Tetris*, *Missile Command* and *Painter*. Your head starting to hurt? Okay, here, as clearly and concisely as possible, is how it's done...

TWO-PLAYER MODE

Rampart **works best in two-player mode, with the players facing each other across the (very narrow) sea. First, each chooses a site for his fort.**



Each player is given three cannons to start off with, to position where he likes inside the castle. More are awarded as territory is conquered.

Then the battle commences. Each player frantically lobs cannon-balls to demolish the other's fort. The more cannons you have the better.

Rebuild and repair your fort with *Tetris*-shaped blocks. First fix your walls. Then try to enclose as much extra territory as poss.

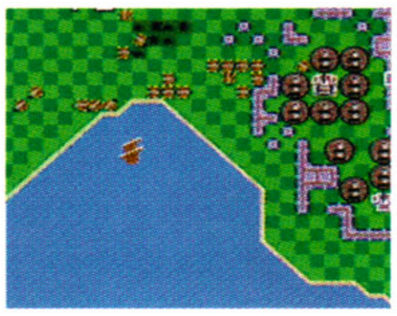
Repeat ad infinitum (or until one player's fort is irrevocably damaged.) (Or three rounds are up, whereupon the winner is the one with the most territory.)

The winner gets to make the loser walk the plank.

ONE-PLAYER MODE

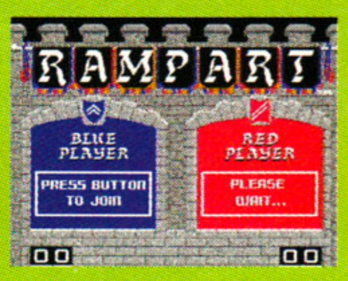
One-player mode works in much the same way, only you're defending your fort against an invading navy.

Some ships sail towards the shore to drop off invaders, while others hang back and shell you.



Invaders head straight for your castle, and make rebuilding it extremely difficult.

GOOD, BAD OR UGLY?



Since *Mario Kart* arrived in the *Super Play* office, Matt and I have settled into a daily routine. First thing in the morning, we have a game of *Mario Kart* – the balloon game, of course. Then we do a bit of work, and then, around elevenish, we have a game of *Mario Kart*. Either side of lunch we have a quick game of *Mario Kart*, and then the afternoon alternates between work, *Mario Kart*, work, *Mario Kart*... Finally, before we go home, we have a game of *Mario Kart*.

Two-player games are the best – you can't deny it. *Mario Kart* is the top two-player game, of course, and we reckoned that nothing could possibly topple it. That's until *Rampart* came along. (*Woah! Surely you're not suggesting... – Ed.*) No, no, not a bit of it. *Rampart*'s a brilliant two-player game (not so good in one-player mode, however), but *Mario Kart*'s still the best.

The nicest thing about *Rampart* is the way it alternates between the puzzley, *Tetris* side of things and the arcadey, *Missile Command* side. It does it so quickly that you don't have a chance to get bored. And as you're up against such a tight time limit, the whole thing's unbelievably frantic and impossibly moreish.

It's not perfect, of course – the problem (as you've no doubt gathered from the pics) is that it looks like a postage stamp factory in the middle of a whirlwind. Some proper graphics would have worked wonders.

To summarise: a fabulous game, especially with two players, but don't let whinging non-Super Nintendo owners get to hear about it.

● Jonathan Davies

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
39%	73%	87%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	79%
80%		

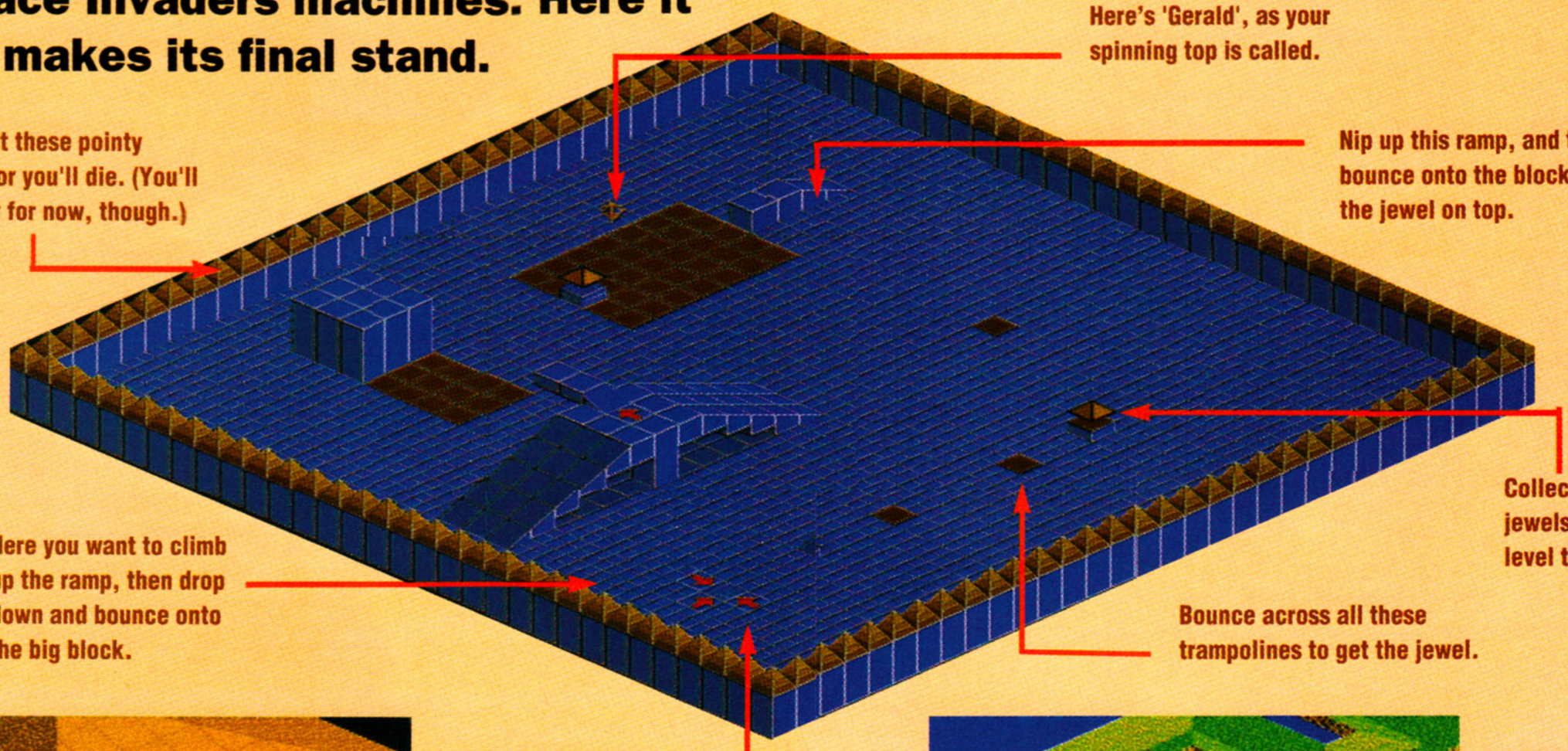
VERDICT: As a one-player game this is merely okay, but in two-player mode it really motors.

SPINDIZZY WORLDS

Japanese Release

Game: Spindizzy Worlds
Publisher: Ascii
Developer: Paul Shirley (original)
Price: Approx. £45
Release: Out now
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

The spinning top is a dying breed. Along with the hoop and stick, and other simple yet effective playthings, it's gradually being superseded by Transformers, My Little Ponies and (heaven forbid) Space Invaders machines. Here it makes its final stand.


Here's 'Gerald', as your spinning top is called.
Don't hit these pointy blocks or you'll die. (You'll be okay for now, though.)
Nip up this ramp, and then bounce onto the block with the jewel on top.
Collect all the jewels on each level to finish it.
Here you want to climb up the ramp, then drop down and bounce onto the big block.
Bounce across all these trampolines to get the jewel.
Arrows nudge you in directions you'd prefer not to move in.

Pooh – it sphinx in here! This is a sandy, pyramid-strewn Egyptian level, where you've got to dodge between obelisks, switch switches and collect jewels.

'Gutter press?' Er, 'Completely guttered?' Well, here's The Waterworks, anyway. Avoid falling in the water. And collect the jewels. (Again.)

GOOD, BAD OR UGLY?

One of my fondest childhood memories is playing *Spindizzy* on my Spectrum. This isn't *Spindizzy* proper, though. Not as I remember it. It's actually a conversion of the Amiga game, *Spindizzy Worlds*, which took the original, scrapped the huge playing area and replaced it with lots of mini-worlds, each with its own graphics and problems to solve. A pity, that, as the original was very much an exploration-based game, while *Spindizzy Worlds* revolves more around solving puzzles. I hate puzzles.

Spectrum owners will feel at home with the game's presentation, which is diabolical. No, really it is. The in-game graphics are quite a bit better, though, with smooth scrolling and some attractively designed landscapes, but they've still got a slightly tacky, unfinished quality to them.

But *Spindizzy* isn't all about graphics. It's about the tricky process of guiding a spinning top up and down ramps, across bridges, along narrow walkways, onto lifts and over ravines, and that's something *Spindizzy Worlds* does very well. Unfortunately, however, it clouds the issue with all these puzzles involving switches, lifts and disappearing blocks, most of which boil down to trial and error and aren't much fun at all. It gets boring a lot quicker than the *Spindizzy* I remember.

● Jonathan Davies

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
69%	50%	76%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
70%	69%	

VERDICT: A nice idea, with a distinct air of nostalgia about it, but it's a bit too patchy and empty-feeling to hold one's interest for long. The original Spectrum game was more fun – lots of exploration, and less of the crummy puzzles.

SOUL BLAZER

US Release

Game: Soul Blazer
Publisher: Enix
Developer: Quintet
Price: Approx. £45
Release: Available now
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit + BB

Starting at Grass Valley, a mountain village, the Soul Blader must revive the souls trapped by Deathtoll. Once the village is repopulated, progress can be made and the deserted and empty land of Green Wood can be re-built. There are four more stages to tackle after this.

In the same month that the unusual *Actraiser* livens up the UK release schedules (see page 82), its equally weird follow-up *Soul Blazer* makes it into the country on import. (It's known as *Soul Blader* in Japan, by the way – this is the translated US version, which makes it *much* more playable...)

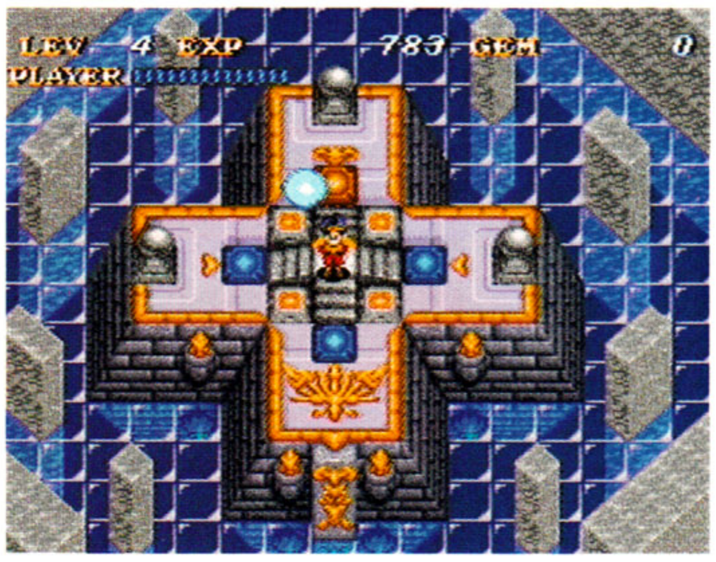
WHO IS THE SOUL BLAZER?

He's this guy – recognise him? Thought not – he's one of the little red chaps from *Actraiser* who seals the monsters' lairs (or, at least, he *looks* very like one). Sent down to Friel by the master (also out of *Actraiser*, at a guess), it's his job to clean up the land and reconstruct the towns.

SOUL SEARCHIN'

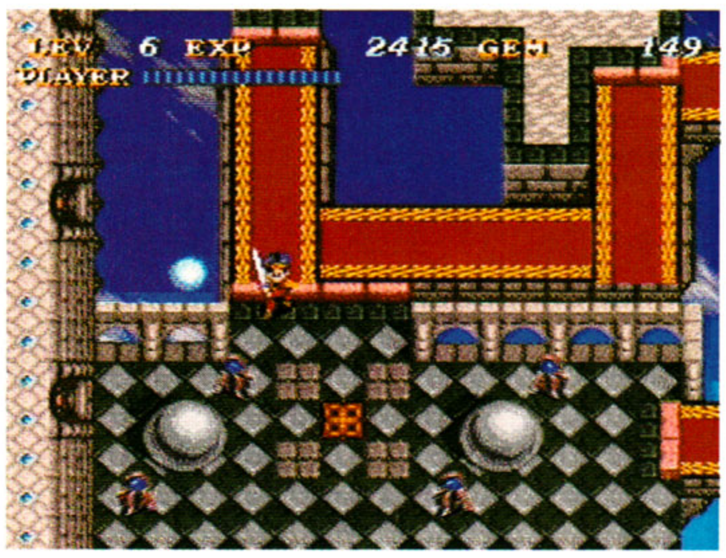
Like most Japanese RPGs, the original *Soul Blader* was tricky to play for English speakers – you'd just think you were getting into it when an impossible puzzle would stump you completely. At first, the game was thought to be a direct sequel to *Actraiser*, as similarities abound throughout, but this isn't actually the case – officially, anyway. However, the same team worked on it, and some of the characters and scenarios *appear* to be shared. What's *definitely* different is the game structure – this is an RPG/arcade adventure, that was a God-sim crossed with *Rastan Saga*. However, they share themes – combat and restoration of the land. The six towns of the Friel Empire are being held captive by an evil monster, and you must settle his hash...

A CIVILISATION - TRAPPED!

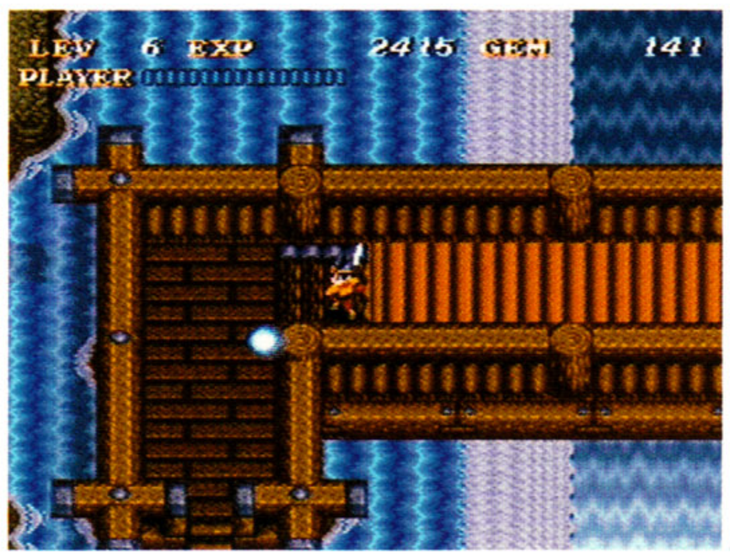


The Master's shrines mark the beginning of each stage. Our hero's life meter can be refilled at this point, and the game can also be saved from here. A practice room gives you a brief encounter with potential hazards. Die a lot and here's where you end up.

This is the peaceful bit, where your task is to rebuild the land. It's done by travelling around the action stages, killing monsters and sealing their lairs. Yeah, there's lots of killing, but not in this bit. (You don't even get to swing your sword around for practice.)



In each of the different lands, there are sections with nasties to kill. This is either done by repeated slashing with your sword, or using magic collected along the way. In this part of the game the Soul Blader has been warped into a strange painting...!



A marvellous parallax waterfall scrolls past beautifully, as your hero tries out his walking-backward-as-he-fights move. This is achieved by holding down the L or R button as you walk. The great thing about this is that baddies can be taken out whilst your hero retreats. Simple really.

GOURMET GOATS? WHAT'S GOING ON?

It seems these screen shots have been tampered with – I'm *sure* I had more stuff than this. Weapons, armour, magic and special items are collected along the way to provide you with more firepower, greater defence and (often) direct solutions to problems encountered. There's much better stuff later on, honest.

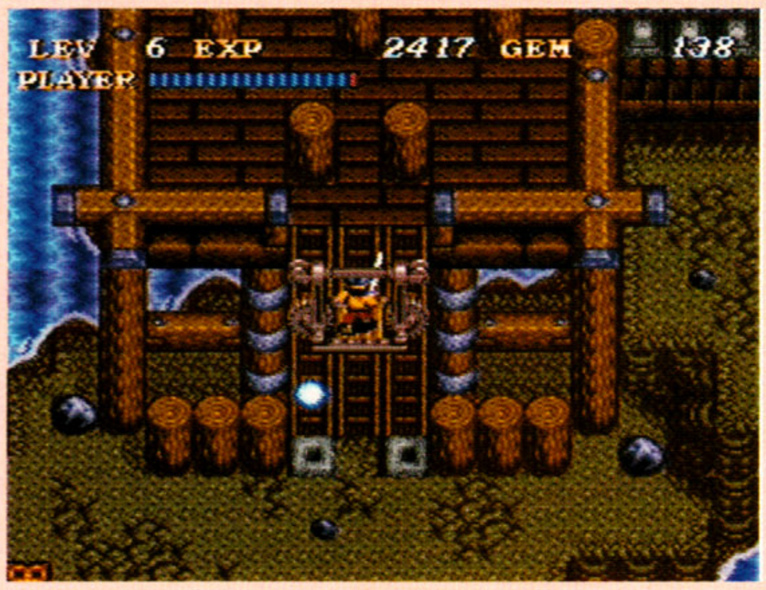
THE MEDICAL HERB: This pile of shrubs restores your hit points after they've reached zero. Grateful people hand them out.

DREAM ROD: This is a useful object, needed to look into peoples' dreams, and also to talk to sleeping creatures.

GOAT FOOD: In Grass Valley there is a weird 'gourmet' goat that will do absolutely anything for a bag of his favourite nosh.

PAINT BRUSH: This is used to travel between the real world and Dr Leo's 'strange' painting world. Wacky stuff I'm afraid.

'If you love someone, set them free.' Once you've killed a creature in the evil world, it reappears, 'cured' if you will, in the good one. This dog will now act as your guide for the next segment of the game.



This is the elevator in the underground castle in Grass Valley, and is just part of an invention designed by a chap called Dr Leo (under duress from the greedy king, I might add) to bring Deathtoll to the land.

When making your way through action stations like this, sealing a lair activates a switch and opens up new areas to explore. Here's the water shrine temple in Green Wood, where Soul Blazer's about to get lost.

The orb that floats around the hero is just one of the souls that join you on your quest. The 'mole soul' makes light work (sorry) of these dark chambers – acting as a torch. Nice effect, too.

GOOD, BAD OR UGLY?

Since no-one jumped at the opportunity of reviewing this, I ended up getting lumbered – my experience with *Zelda* being such a prerequisite for a fair review (or so Matt and JD insisted). It's surprising no-one was keen, really – and certainly their loss. After all, this is an uncomplicated but involved game that uses the traditional top-down RPG view of things like *Zelda* to good effect. Okay, it's not quite the game *Zelda* is, but it's still excellent fun. If we were talking platform games it'd be more an *Addam's Family* than a *Super Mario World* –very polished and entertaining, but lacking the depth of gameplay that makes a game a classic.

On the surface *Soul Blazer* treads familiar RPG territory, avoiding the weaker elements that plague many of these games – there's none of that tedious alternate-move combat stuff here, for instance. Indeed, most of the action seems to involve'hacking enemies to bits, *Zelda*-style, and walking around talking to people. Don't be put off if at first this seems a little dull – once you've started making progress the quest becomes increasingly involving and, it must be said, strange. In the first level you seem to spend half your time talking to goats and jumping into Impressionist paintings (!), for instance – very odd indeed. (Whether or not you go for this is purely a question of taste, of course – me, I want dwarfs, wizards and princesses in an RPG, not talking plants, airborne temples and dogs called Turbo, but if those latter elements appeal to you, hey, why not? Go for it.)

Technically the game can't be faulted – it's smoother and slicker than Jonathan Davies (*Impossible! – Ed.*), with beautiful animation – the colour-cycling effects used to depict moving water and so on are among the best I've seen. Shame about the useless music on certain sections, though – perhaps we'll have to wait for the *Actraiser II* that's been rumoured for some more decent stuff.

An excellent, and slightly weird, game, then – but not a classic. Still, despite its faults – chiefly a certain lack of character versatility, and small overall game size – *Soul Blazer* delivers.

● Jason Brookes

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
90%	79%	84%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
86%	89%	

VERDICT: Quintet (the creators of *Actraiser*), have produced an extremely polished game here, with great graphics, decent puzzles and a zany plot. If you can tolerate some laughable translations in this American version it's good fun.

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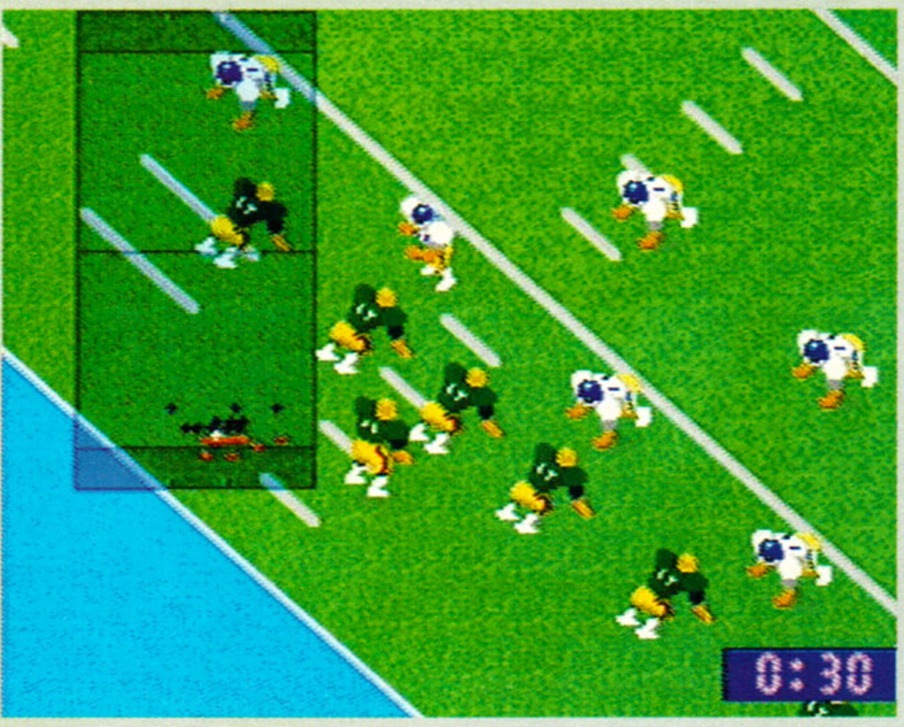
SUPER PLAY ACTION FOOTBALL

How do you review a game you don't even understand? Well, we did it with plenty of reference to the rule book, that's how...

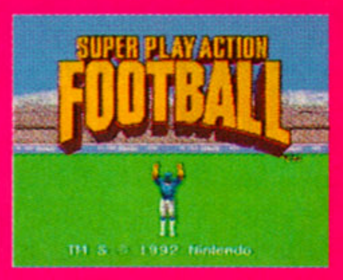
US Release

Game: Super Play Action Football
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Nintendo of America
Price: Approx. £45
Release: Out now
Players: 1 or 2
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit + BB



Here we are on a typical in-game screen. The diagonal viewpoint works fine for the close-up action, but makes working out where you are in relation to the rest of the pitch somewhat awkward – field goals (like a conversion in rugby, where you boot the ball right over everybody's heads through the opposition goal) are dead tricky when you can't see which direction to kick, for instance, and that's *with* the scanner on screen. The straight up-down action of *Madden* works much better.

GOOD, BAD OR UGLY?



Unlike baseball, which is massive in both the States and Japan, and so has a plethora of games devoted to it, the sport of American football has yet to suffer from Super Nintendo overkill. Currently, there are only three games available: *John Madden Football*, a weak version of Electronic Arts' world-beating Mega Drive game; *Ultimate Football* from Sammy; and this one, *Super Play Action Football* (that's an ace name, by the way). This game has only just arrived in American shops, despite being originally advertised ages ago – the late arrival suggests that a long time has been spent playtesting the thing, and that, coupled with the Nintendo name, had us quite looking forward to it.

However, on arrival it was a bit of a disappointment. Such is the stop/start and heavily tactical nature of American football that it'll take most people ages to get into *any* gridiron game, and even longer for one as involved as this. It boasts an NFL licence, you see, and comes with, we presume, accurate and certainly exhaustive details of the High School, College and NFL rules, real team statistics, and oodles of set plays – all guaranteed to be attractive to real fans, but off-putting for the rest of us. Certainly, to get the most out of it will take a lot of work.

Add sprites that aren't that well drawn and unconvincing animation and the heart sinks a bit. Disappointing though *John Madden* was on the SNES, at least it gave you plenty of actual time playing the game – here you seem to be always picking between plays, making the experience even more stop/start than it has to be.

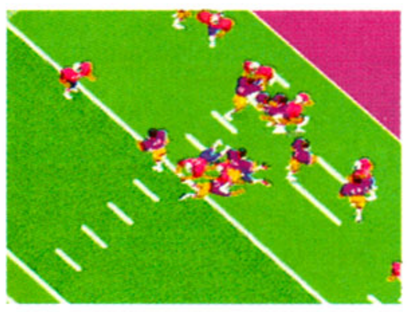
That all said though, if you really love American football, *Super Play Action Football* will serve your needs pretty well. It's certainly detailed, it's packed with controls and options, and getting to grips with all the plays will take you weeks. However, for most potential buyers I can't help feeling that the more accessible *John Madden*, flawed though it is, would be a better bet. And when the new, improved *Madden '93* comes out next year, it really *will* be no contest.

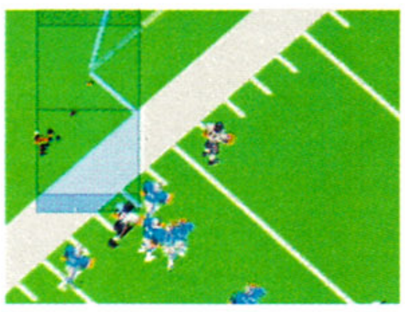
● Matt Bielby

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
70%	65%	73%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	71%
85%		

VERDICT: A complex American football game – it has an off-putting number of plays and controls to deal with, but is a faithful and accurate game. This one is good for fans, great for statistic-freaks, but is a little too heavy for the rest of us.

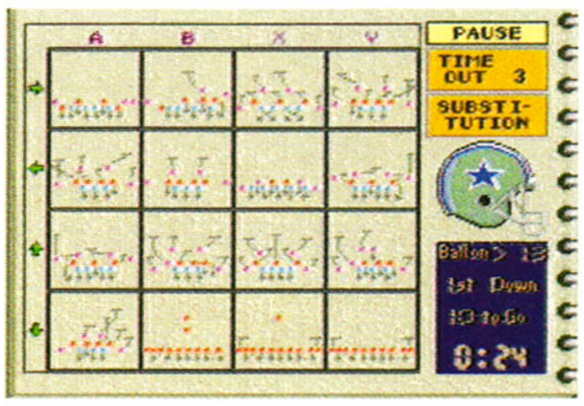
INTRICATE CONTROLS FOR AN INTRICATE GAME





Controls in the game get more complicated as you venture from the relatively simple High School game, with easy rules and fewer plays (above left) into the rarified heights of College then Professional NFL football (above right). Remembering that button A lets you snap (throw the ball backwards between your legs) at the beginning of a down, say, but at any time after that makes your player sprint or perform a power tackle (depending on which is most suitable), takes some doing – and there are *loads* of things to remember. It gets more complicated as you progress up the difficulty levels of the game. Nine times out of ten, the person who wins is the guy who has most experience with the controls, *not* the most talented player.

'AUDIBLES'...



'Audibles' are set strategic patterns your team will try to carry out during each 'down' (burst of action). This is just one page of many!

...AND WORSE!

However, picking audibles isn't the only bit of management stuff you'll find yourself doing. There's substitution, like this, for instance.

ZELDA III: A LINK TO THE PAST

SUPER PLAYER'S GUIDE

THE COMPLETE SOLUTION

By Nick Burne

Part One

For those of you who don't know the *Zelda* series, where have you been? These games are enormously popular in America – where they're second only to *Mario* – and they're enormously, erm, enormous, so much so that getting all the way through one of them can be a nightmare. Or at least, it would be without a Super Player's Guide. The game we're dealing with here is *Zelda III*, the most recent of the series and the only one to be released on the Super Nintendo. It's available in the UK on official release now (see review page 68), making this Super Player's Guide ideal timing. Top tipster Nick Burne leads us through the Light World – the first half of the game. Next month it's the Dark World's turn, and the game's conclusion. Here we go...

(Note: to get you going, we've gone into the earliest stages of the game in great detail, showing you exactly what you've got to do. Later on, we skip the more obvious bits, but don't you worry – by then you'll be so familiar with the game that you'll be able to work out the rest for yourself.)

Rescuing Zelda

After waking up and reading what your uncle has to say, gather together all the items in your house and step outside. (Oh no – it's raining!) Leave the screen by proceeding north, and follow the path to the castle. Just before you reach the guard at the gate there are two paths: take the right-hand one. At the end of this path there's a bush and some stones. Rip the bush out of the ground and fall down the hole underneath. 1

Leave the next room through the exit in the north-west corner. Now two doors with spikes will drop down but, after you've killed the guard, they'll re-open. In the room to the right there are lots of statues, a guard with a key and a treasure chest containing a boomerang. You'll now have the key to open the door at the top of the previous room. Go through this door and down to the dungeon level 2 where the beautiful Princess Zelda is being held captive.

In The Castle

You should now find yourself in some water. Proceed left and talk to your uncle. Practice a few swings with your sword and head out of the door into a room. As soon as you enter the room, kill the two guards and collect the various treasures. (This is a good place to learn how to use the lantern.) Now walk up the stairs and head out across the garden towards the castle, killing the guards along the way. Having entered the castle, proceed left. Then run upwards and through the door. That'll take you to a long corridor with two pots at the end. After killing the guards, proceed right. Then go down the stairs to level B1.

You'll now be in a room with a locked door at the bottom. (In the treasure chest there's a map.) To get out of the room you'll need to get the key from the guard by killing him. Then proceed into the next room killing guards or knocking them off the platforms.

This is it, this is what you've come for! Go down there, fight the hordes of guards and rescue her.

Here's how you do it: at the bottom of the stairs there's only one guard and a morning star (a spiky ball on a chain). Grab the hearts under the pots in the first cell and then kill the guard to get the big key. 3 Open Zelda's cell and... Hurrah! You've completed the game! (Er, only joking.)

After hearing what Zelda has to say for herself, make sure you grab the rupees from the chest and follow Zelda's orders by going to the first floor (she'll be following you). Along the way you'd be advised to collect as many hearts as possible. You should now be in the room you first entered in the castle. Run out at the top of the screen and into the throne room. Do as Zelda says, and push the pretty pink shelf from the left.

You should now be in a dark room. (Don't worry – you'll reach Sanctuary soon.) Light the torches along your way to illuminate the rooms – but watch out for the snakes and rats! You'll soon come to a room with a locked door. A key can be found in the chest to the right. You should now appear in the sewers. Walk through the exit in the left-hand wall, and soon you'll come to another room which has a locked door. This time a rat has the key. After passing through the dark sewers you'll arrive in a lighted room. Sanctuary isn't far away! Push the middle block upwards to get to the stairs. After a while, you'll come to a room with two levers – pull the one on the right. You can now enter Sanctuary!

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Sanctuary

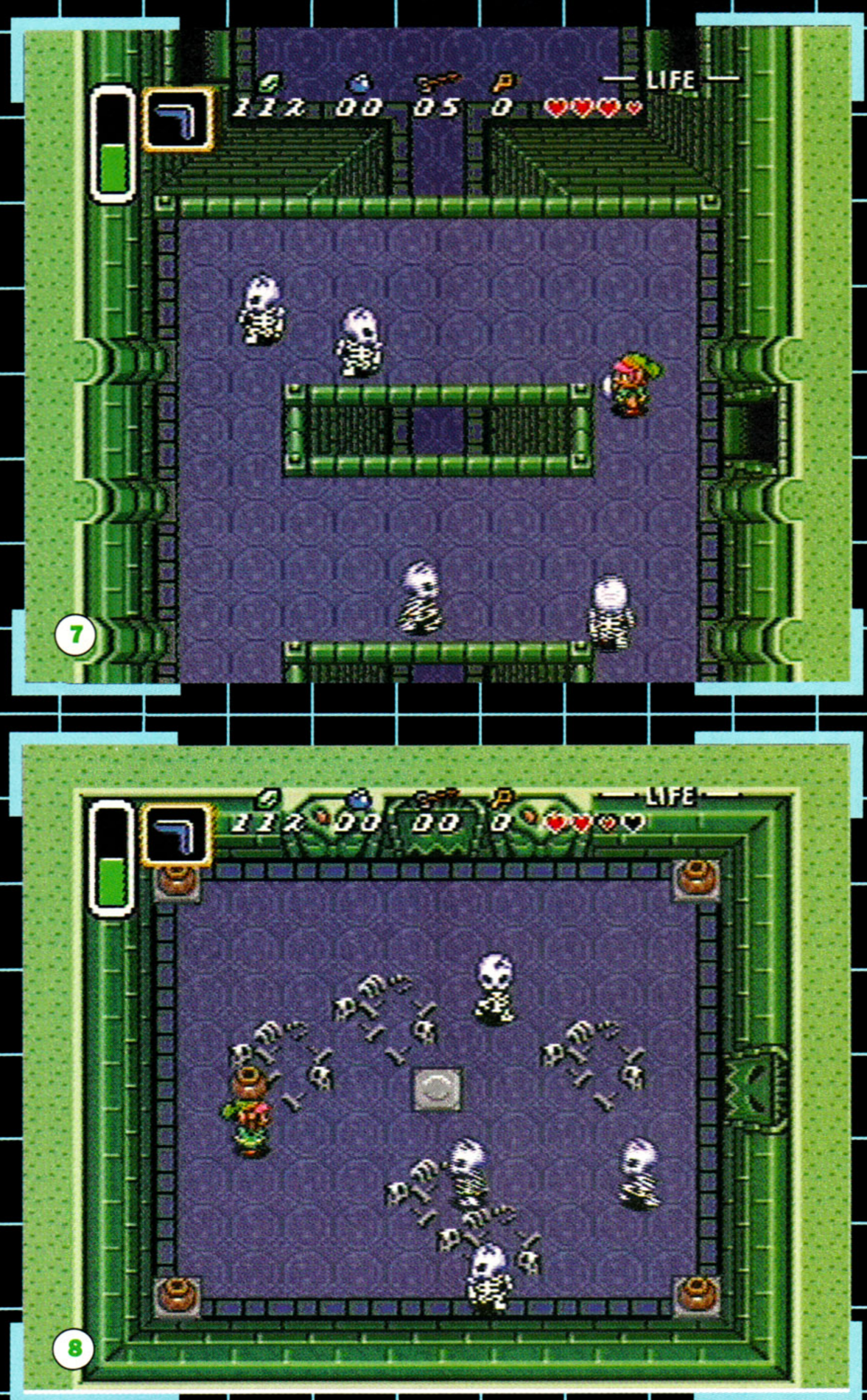
After hearing what the old bloke and Zelda have to say, 4 grab the heart container and leave without Zelda. (Now's a sensible time to save your game.) It might seem like you've done quite a lot already, but this is really only the beginning of a great adventure. Are you up to the challenge?

Going To Town

On your way to town, watch out for guards. (Use your boomerang a lot – it's a useful weapon.) Try to find the quickest route possible.

In Town

Having spoken to the old woman, to find the Elder you'll have to locate his grandson who lives in the south-west of town. 5 (He has lots of chickens around him.) A good place to go at this point is the thieves' hideout (located next to the old woman's house) to gather rupees. There's also a secret room which can be entered by blowing up the wall with a bomb. (If you jump from the hill into the well at the north-west of town you'll enter a cave loaded with rupees and bombs.) There's another secret room which contains a piece of heart. The woman sweeping her path has yet another secret room in the right-hand side of her house which contains 10 arrows. There's a sick boy in one house who'll give you a bug-catching net, but you need a bottle from the merchant in the centre of town. You can also get one from the back of the pub. (Bottles are very helpful for holding flies, fairies and magic potions.) You should now leave town and head for the Elder.



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The Elder

The Elder lives in a complex on the east side of the map. 6 Now would be another good time to save the game, as you can restart from your house and therefore save time. Sahasrahla tells you that, in order to get the Master Sword, you need to collect three pendants. The first, the Pendant Of Courage, is in the East Palace. Be sure to return to Sahasrahla when you have the pendant, and he'll give you some magic boots. Also there's a secret passage at the back of Sahasrahla's temple.

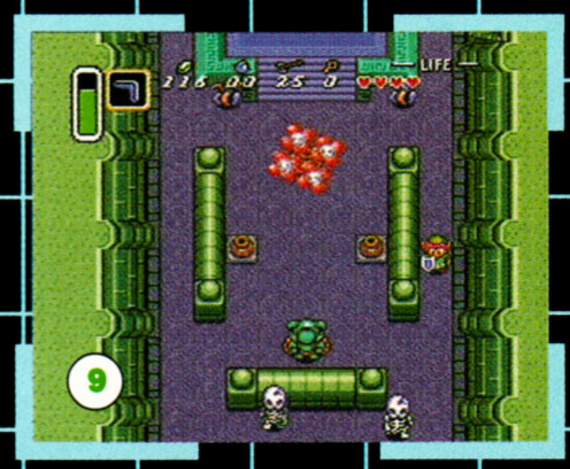
The East Palace

When you first enter the palace you'll find three doors. The one you want is in the middle. A switch to open this door is hidden under the pot in front of it. In the next room there are three tentacled things and a hidden switch on the floor. Kill the beasties and press the switch. The door will open, allowing you to leave. You'll then enter a room with some balls rolling down the screen. (Shades of Indy here!) You need to run through the passageway and escape through the exit at the top of the stairs. In the next room, head left. The switch to open the door is between two pots. In the room after that there are four evil skeletons. 7 To kill these horrors, corner them and and hit 'em fast.

After defeating the skeletons, leave the room and you'll enter another with lots of bones on the floor. 8 To exit, kill the skeletons that appear and the door will open. (The pots are handy weapons!) In this next room there's a treasure chest containing a compass. This compass shows you the location of the boss. Soon, you'll come to a passageway with an ornate tile on the wall. Touch this tile and Sahasrahla will talk to you telepathically! (Spooky, huh?) You should then leave through the right-hand door. At last – you're in the treasure room!

Alas, you don't have the big key to open the chest, so leave through the right-hand door. In the next room, dash up the stairs and you'll find yourself in a dark room with a locked door on the left and a spiky door on the right. Press the switch and go through the spiky door. In this room there are several skeletons and a key in the top right-hand pot. Use this key to open the locked door. You will now be in the area you first entered, but on a higher floor. Go through the door on the left. In this room there are lots of floating skulls huddled together, 9 and when you kill everything in the room they fly apart to reveal a switch! Press the switch to make a chest appear which contains... the big key!

Now rush through the door at the top and push the right-hand block to proceed. Head right, into the treasure room. In the massive chest there's a bow. 10 (Some treasure!



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ZELDA III (Continued)

You might be a little disappointed by this, but try not to be – this bow actually proves to be very handy, as it allows you to attack people from a distance.) Watch out for the trap! If you jump into the pots at the top of the screen you'll enter a room containing two fairies. If you've got a net catch them and put them in those bottles – each one earns you a Continue. After you've re-appeared, leave through the door at the top of the screen.

You will now have entered a dark room with two green statues and lots of those tentacled monsters. Light the torches with your lantern to see better. In the top left of this room there's a locked door (a statue has got the key) and an open door on the top right. Go through the top right door. In this room there are countless rupees for you to collect. After gathering them, go through the locked door in the previous room.

You'll now be on floor 2F.

The switch to open the door is under the bottom left pot. Kill the statues by using your arrows and press the bottom switch to open the door. The top left switch in the next room will open the spiky doors. Okay, if you've got this far you're doing really well. In this room there are two skeletons and a red statue (which takes more hits than the others) and a sign signifying the boss! Kill the gruesome beasts and prepare yourself! In the next room there are more tentacled things and TWO red guards! Dispose of the foul creatures and walk boldly forwards...

The Boss!

Those people at Nintendo don't want you to complete this game in a hurry, that's for sure. They don't give you just one boss – they give you six! 11 But even though they look hard, the bosses are really easy to polish off. Simply walk to the bottom left-hand corner of the room and fire arrows. When there's only one boss left, he turns red and throws a wobbly! Hit him just as he topples to the ground and dodge, dodge, dodge! Use these tactics, add a bit of practice, and you'll have him, no sweat! (Hopefully.)

The Pendant

Well done – you've got the pendant! 12 Give it to Sahasrahla to get the magic Boots Of Speed. These boots enable you to travel extremely fast for a short time. Now prepare to enter the Dark World and win the next pendant!

(Getting the hang of how to do it yet? Great, then from this point on we can dispense with some of the details and just show you how to do the key tasks in the game – the rest of it you can work out for yourself.)

Pendant Two!

Before heading for the desert palace (located in the bottom left of the map) you should stop at the library at the bottom of town. Inside you will find a green book on top of a bookcase. Charge at the bookcase and the book will fall to the floor. Collect the book and head towards the desert.

Once in the desert, walk up to the pillar and use the green book. 13 You'll begin to pray and the statues will swivel round to let you enter!

Floor B1

You'll have now entered the desert palace and will be on floor B1. Head towards the top left room and inside there will be four pillars, one of which has a key on top. Ram this pillar and the key will drop down. Exit this room and make your way to the right side of the map where you'll find a door to open with the key. Here you'll find a chest to open, then head out of the room (via the top exit) and zoom to the top of the next room grabbing the big key. Now go to the big chest located in the top left of the map. Inside you will find a Power Glove! (No this doesn't allow you to play Zelda by moving your hand!) This glove allows you to pick up the light coloured rocks you'll come across fairly often – you can throw them at baddies, and there's often useful stuff hidden underneath.

Head out of the palace through the bottom left exit and you should see an entrance surrounded by stones. Rip 'em out of the ground to get through.

Now push the middle block on the right towards the right-hand wall and make your way to 2F. 14

After journeying through 2F you should come to a dead end with four

torches. 15 Light these with your lantern and the passage will grow, allowing you to step through the exit. Of course, as soon as you do so, you might decide that stepping through the exit was a bit of a mistake – all that's there are some dreaded sand worms to fight!

The Worms!

There are three worms to fight. Their weak spots are their heads, which you should smack with your sword. They're not that tough – try to concentrate on them one at a time and they'll soon be vanquished! After that it's one pendant to go and then we're off after the Master Sword! You should be getting pretty good at fighting by now, which will help!

The Third And Last Pendant!

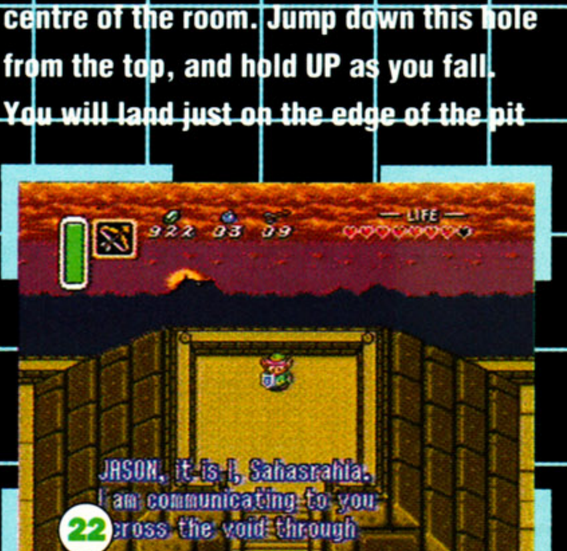
Now you are near the end of your quest for the Master Sword. Next stop is the mountain tower located at the top of the map – to enter it you need to take the mountain cave entrance just below the lumberjack's house.

Negotiate these tunnels until you meet an old man. 16 Don't worry, he isn't an enemy, he just needs you to take him to his home on the mountain.

After you've made your way through the caves, the old man will give you a magic mirror. This is essential to your quest. Now make your way to the top of the mountain, where there is a flashing tile surrounded by stones. Pick up one of the stones and walk into the tile. 17

You'll now be teleported into a completely new world – the Dark World! And oh no – you've been transformed into a cute bunny, too!

Here you will find two creatures playing and two clearings on the ground. Walk into one of the clearings and use the magic mirror. You'll be whisked back into the real world (And back into your own skin again!). Now you are on top of Spectacle Rock. Jump off the mountain and enter the Tower Of Hera. 18



Floor 2F

You are now on floor 2F. Hit the crystal ball and the tiles will drop down allowing you to walk over them. 19 Hit another ball and walk through the second set of tiles and grab that treasure. Now head back down and enter the stairwell which takes you to 1F. Make your way through all the rooms until you get the key. Go back down to 2F and through the locked door at the top of the room.

You will reappear back in 1F but in a different area, where you will find the big key – if you kill all the evil tiles that throw themselves at you, that is. Exit and go up the stairwell to 3F.

Head all the way around 3F and up to 4F where you will see a treasure chest which contains the Moon Pearl, which protects you from turning into that cute bunny in the Dark World.

However you can't get the Moon Pearl yet! So go up to 5F and step on the star tile. A hole will appear near the top centre of the room. Jump down this hole from the top, and hold UP as you fall. You will land just on the edge of the pit

but you will run forwards as you land. Grab the Moon Pearl from the chest and go back up to 5F.

Run through 5F and up to 6F where the boss, the Giant Wurm lies. Be brave, be strong, be tough (be lucky!)

Giant Wurm

There is no simple way of beating this boss. His weak spot is his tail, so keep hitting this and dodging all the time while trying to avoid being pushed over the edge. After you defeat this boss, the last pendant is yours! Now go to the Lost Woods and grab that Master Sword!

At Last – The Master Sword!

After going through the woods, walk up behind the Master Sword and read the book. The pendants will fly out of your hands and the sword will be yours! 20 When your energy is at its maximum you can fire lightning bolts out of the tip of the sword. But, suddenly, Zelda contacts you by telepathy, and tells you to go to Sanctuary quickly.

When you arrive you find that Zelda has been kidnapped again. To rescue her, go to Hyrule Castle, where the evil wizard is keeping her.

Go to the roof and you will find an electric barrier blocking your way. Destroy it with the Master Sword and go through. Fight your way past guards and other beasts until you enter the room where the evil wizard teleports Zelda into the Dark World. 21

You should then hack the middle curtain and head into the wizard's hideout. Inside he will attack you!

The Wizard

To defeat the evil wizard you must deflect his spells back at him by hitting them with your sword. After you hit him seven times he teleports you to the Dark World as well! 22

Next month: We show you how to complete the Dark World! Join us then for the final exciting part of *Zelda: The Complete Solution*.

SONIC BLAST MAN

Japanese Release

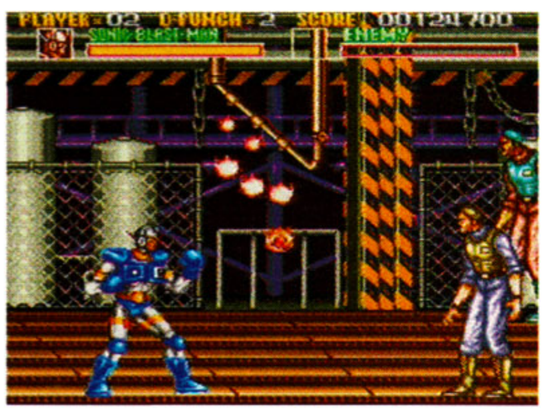
Game: Sonic Blast Man
Publisher: Taito
Developer: In-house
Price: Approx. £45
Release: Out now
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Playing the *Sonic Blast Man* coin-op involves hitting the machine really hard. If you punched your Super Nintendo, though, it would probably break, *so...*

What sort of a hero is Sonic Blast Man? He hasn't got X-ray vision, he can't fly (except in the intro sequence), he can't swing on webs and he doesn't go all green and explode out of his clothes. *However...* he *can* punch people really hard, and in a variety of interesting ways – including his legendary D-punch. That good enough for you?

They say don't punch a man when he's down. In *Sonic Blast Man*, however, it's often an idea to finish people off while they're still on their knees.

Punch oil drums, and you'll find goodies lurking beneath.



Players of the *Final Fight* coin-op may well recognise this bit.

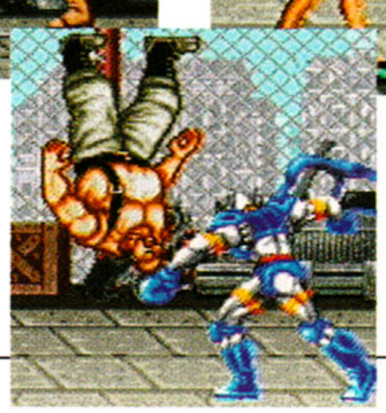
Eek! It's an end-of-level baddie. This fly-thing revolves around in Mode 7 spitting bubbles, while his henchmen wrap themselves around you like boa constrictors.

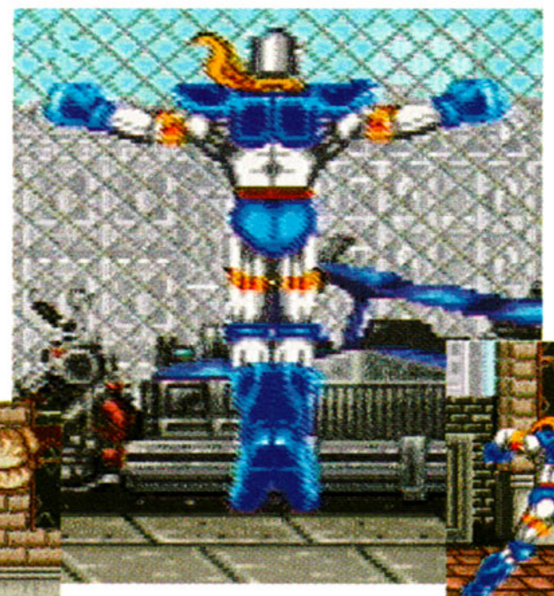
Here you're up on a girder swinging hundreds of feet above the ground.

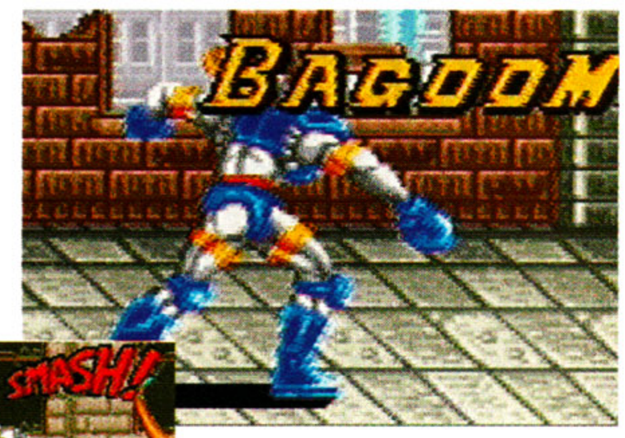
On level three you have to battle with these weird transparent baddies.

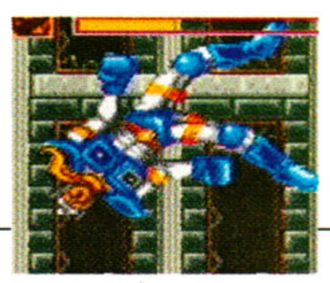
ZAP! BLAM! KER-POW! WHAM!

Sonic Blast Man dealing with those baddies in his individual style.









HIT LIST

Considering they're packing sub-machine guns, these chaps aren't too tricky to polish off at all.

These ginger-haired young ladies are (amazingly) the toughest baddies we've come across. They're *vicious*.

In stark contrast, these fellows just sort of stand there while you beat them up. (The wimps.)

You won't encounter these chaps till the end of level two. They're really annoying, and keep sliding into you.

Grenade! If you see one of these blokes heading your way, dive for cover before you get blown up.

BETWEEN LEVEL BONUS BIT

Step 1: First choose your disaster.

Step 2: Its the runaway-truck-heading-for-baby one.

Step 3: Punch the truck to bits and everybody's happy.

HOW TO PACK THAT POWERFUL D-PUNCH

1 Hold down the 'L' button, release it and press Y.

2 Your D-punch power swells...

3 ...rumble rumble rumble...

4 ...fatoom!

GOOD, BAD OR UGLY?

I must confess that I'm not *Super Play*'s biggest beat-'em-up fan. Games like *Final Fight* and *Rival Turf* do very little for me, and I don't even play *Street Fighter II* all that often. So why am I reviewing *Sonic Blast Man*? Er... (Hang on a minute, would you?)

Well, apparently, it's because the only person in the *Super Play* office who *does* like beat-'em-ups is Sue. (And she's not allowed to write reviews.) So Matt and Jason got together – behind my back – and decided that I was going to review it. And to ensure I get on with it, Matt's locked my lunch money in his desk until I've finished. Not fair, is it?

So – *Sonic Blast Man*. It's a game that draws much of its inspiration from *Final Fight*. The basic layout is very similar, and lots of minor details look suspiciously familiar – the fat blokes with braces, for example, and the oil drums that you punch to get bonus objects. There's also a level set in a factory that's very similar to one in the *Final Fight* coin-op.

It does have lots of new bits, though. I did like the intermediate levels where you punch buildings and trucks. And Blast Man is splendidly over-the-top with his arsenal of unfeasible punches and throws.

Graphically the sprites are all nice and big, and not badly animated, and there are some pleasant Mode 7 backgrounds – the bit where you're swinging backwards and forwards on a girder deserves a mention.

But is it any good as a game? Well, personally I reckon it's incredibly tedious. You just walk around hitting people. Some need to be hit more than others, some hit back more than others, and that's about it. But if I just said that it would be a pretty crap review. So, over to Sue:

'I didn't like this as much as *Final Fight*. *Sonic Blast Man* moves around a bit too slowly, and he can't pick up swords and stuff to hit people with. I do like all his special moves, though, particularly the swinging-people-round-and-round one and the grab-them-by-the-hair-and-punch-them-lots-of-times one. And the 100Mt power punch is fab. It's good fun, but, like I said, I prefer *Final Fight*.'

Thanks, Sue. To summarise, then: If you like beat-'em-ups, *Sonic Blast Man* is pretty good, but not quite as good as *Final Fight*. If, on the other hand, you don't like beat-'em-ups, it's incredibly boring. Can I have my lunch now?

● Jonathan Davies

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
73%	77%	70%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
62%		69%

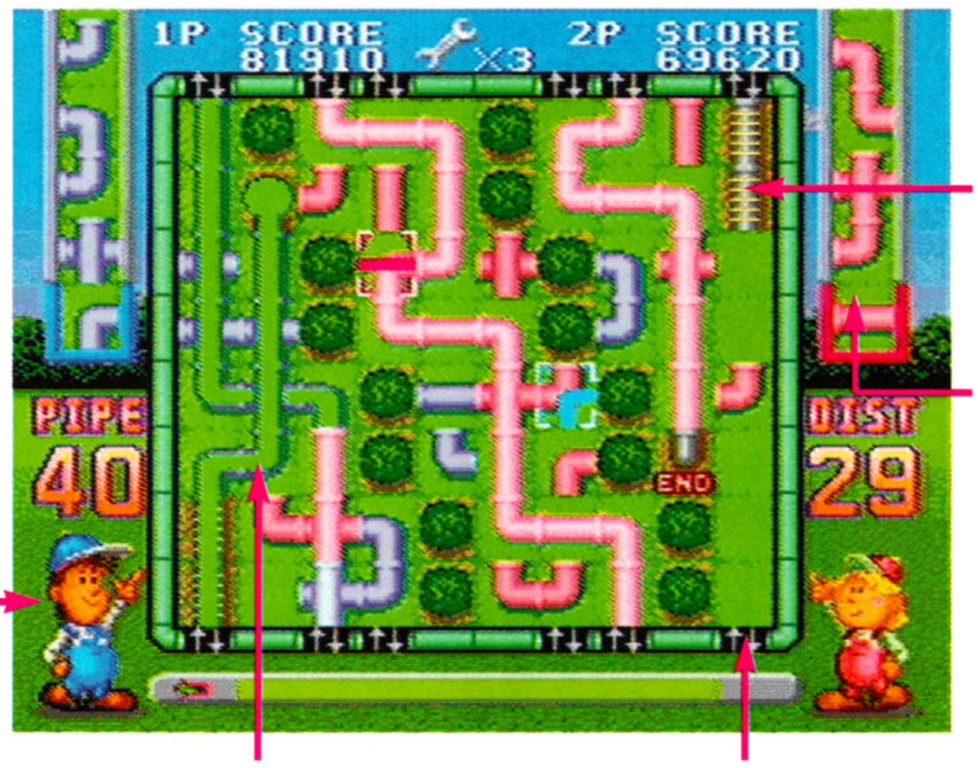
VERDICT: Gameplay-wise, just an average beat-'em-up. But it's got lots of nice bits, and Sonic Blast Man himself is great. Fab for fans of the genre, but no-one else.

PIPE DREAM

Japanese Release

Game: Pipe Dream
Publisher: Bulletproof Software
Developer: In house (Original: The Assembly Line, UK)
Price: Approx. £45
Release: Out now
Players: 1 or 2
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

Remember this from its coin-op and home computer incarnations? A simple but effective post-*Tetris* puzzle game based around plumbers and pipes of flowing water and stuff. It was always fun, but enough to justify a Super NES release? We'll see...



This is one of the screens from level three, where you have to build your pipeline across a lovely lawn (for some reason). Covering this lot up's a real challenge for any landscape gardener...

Fixed pipes like these earn you mega points if you manage to lead the flow through them.

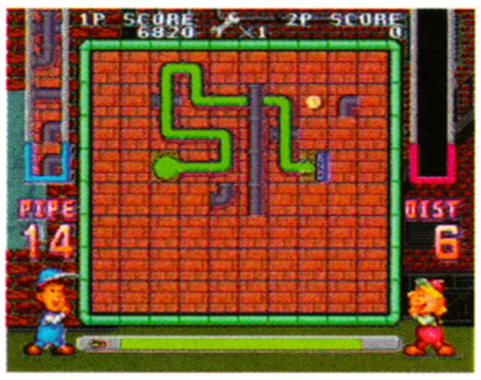
Unlike in *Tetris*, you're given a preview of the pipes coming up in this box here. As you can see, the screen is littered with bits you didn't want.

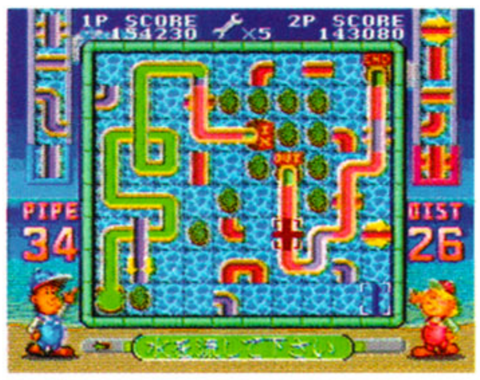
And this is you. Cute, ain'tcha?

Pink pipes for girls, purple/blue pipes for boys. The bright green pipes are ones ooze has already started flowing through. Hurry up!

These arrows allow you to lead the pipe off-screen, to re-enter somewhere else – essential on a tricky screen like this.

PLUMBING (THE PIPE DREAM WAY)





Here's how it works. You play the little plumber at the bottom left of the screen – above you appear a number of lengths of pipe, corners etc, which you have to use in the order they appear to build a pipe from 'S' (start) to 'End' across the screen. You've got to do this against a time limit, using a certain number of pipes – it's no good building a pipe six sections long if you're required to use 12, say. I think it's a bit like *Tetris*, though Jonathan disagrees...

As you can see from the screens above, the game gets more difficult as you progress. In two-player mode you and a chum work together to get the job done as quickly as possible. Most players will waltz through the early levels, and even when things get more complicated, it's hardly the task of the century.

Extra items complicate things as you progress, including exits leading your pipe off screen, as here.

The shop screen – here you get a chance to spend the money you've earned on more time, etc.

GOOD, BAD OR UGLY?

Pipe Dream is one of those simple puzzle game ideas that works well – for a time. Many of you will be familiar with the basic idea, so if you've played Amiga or other versions you'll be pleased to hear that this has been spruced up – little animated sequences bring things to life, and the game screens are improved, too. The game now looks about as attractive as a simple tile-and-pipe affair could be expected to look.

However, despite these improvements there is a problem with the game, and that's overfamiliarity – when something's been out on everything from the Spectrum on up, not to mention as a coin-op too, and has stayed almost exactly the same to play, any new version is *not* going to spark up that much interest. Face it, at Super NES cart prices this isn't going to be a good buy for home computer owners – they'd be wiser dusting off that old Amiga and picking up the nearly identical version on the Amiga Award Winners pack.

But, for those who haven't played this before, it does have a fair amount to recommend it. As a one-player game it's probably better than many rivals – I'd pick it over *Bombuzal*/*Ka-Blooey* for instance – and proves more-ish for a time, though the fact that it stays virtually the same all the way through (with only a few variations) causes repetition to set in all too quickly. The lack of a versus mode limits the appeal rather, too – particularly long-term.

● Matt Bielby

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
61%	62%	72%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
62%		66%

VERDICT: Neat race-against-time puzzle game format, well presented, but lacking the variety, number of levels and essential head-to-head two-player mode to make it a real classic. Almost identical, and cheaper, on home computer formats.

GEORGE FOREMAN'S KO BOXING

US Release

Game: George Foreman's KO Boxing
Publisher: Acclaim
Price: Approx. £45
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Here's our George (with his back to us) – an ex-top fighter, now a rather wrinkly 43 (at least in boxing terms), making his big come-back for the purposes of this game. He's big, he's bad, he's back, as he tells us at the start of this game. Yeah, well, that second bit's certainly right on the money...

But – oh no! – the bad guy's won! Not surprising really, when you realise how little opportunity you're given to dodge his blows. There's variety in the types of punch you can throw, and you can duck to the left or right (or put your mitts up), but that's about it. There's no floating like a butterfly around the ring, that's for sure, which makes for an event-free jab session.

GOOD, BAD OR UGLY?

The problem with boxing games is they're nearly all crap. Why? Because they give you almost nothing to do (just jab away at the buttons a lot), little scope for interesting graphics, and are usually badly programmed. Is this any different? Nah...

In fact, it's even worse than it has to be. Worse than Mindscape's 4D way of doing things (using 3D characters built out of triangles) as seen in the PC game *4D Sports Boxing*, worse than the two giant guys facing each other in Taito's *Final Blow*. This allows almost no movement (you can just duck to one side or the other, but can't move your feet) – the person with his back to us seems to be at a distinct disadvantage in the two-player game. Graphics are ropy and annoying, too (at least one computer controlled fighter's victory dance is enough to make you want to kick the TV). Asking about £45 for it in this country is just a joke. I've rarely been so bored playing a Super Nintendo game. Avoid.

● Matt Bielby

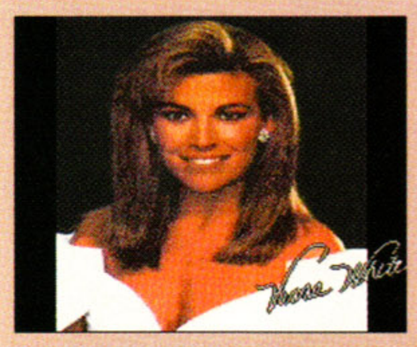
GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
30%	38%	15%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	18%
23%		

VERDICT: Useless boxing game that's a strong contender for the worst SNES release of all time.

VANNA WHITE'S WHEEL OF FORTUNE

US Release

Game: Vanna White's Wheel of Fortune
Publisher: Capcom
Price: Approx. £45
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit



Here's Vanna herself. Apparently she's a fairly big celeb in America, despite being merely the dumb blonde who tots up the scores and points to the prizes.

And here are the contestants, (who'd rather not be here by the look of it.)

This is the wheel (as in '*Wheel of Fortune*'). Needless to say, it spins round in glorious Mode 7.

And last, a question. You've got to fill in the missing letters. Vowels cost you money to choose.

GOOD, BAD OR UGLY?

The last quiz show conversion I played was, I believe, *Blockbusters* on my Spectrum. It had a digitised picture of Bob Holness, but was otherwise pretty boring, especially when the questions were repeated after a few minutes. Could *Wheel Of Fortune* do any better?

I gathered together a few 'contestants' and sat them down. They typed in their names, answered a few questions, won some money and twiddled their thumbs. A crowd gradually assembled in the office, gazing at the screen with incredulous fascination. The controls were horribly slow, and the whole thing tedious. The spectators shuffled off, not quite believing what they'd seen. After a decent interval we switched it off.

What it all boils down to, then, is a game of hangman – one in which half the answers are weird Americanisms that you couldn't possibly guess. (Unless you're American.)

It's horrible.

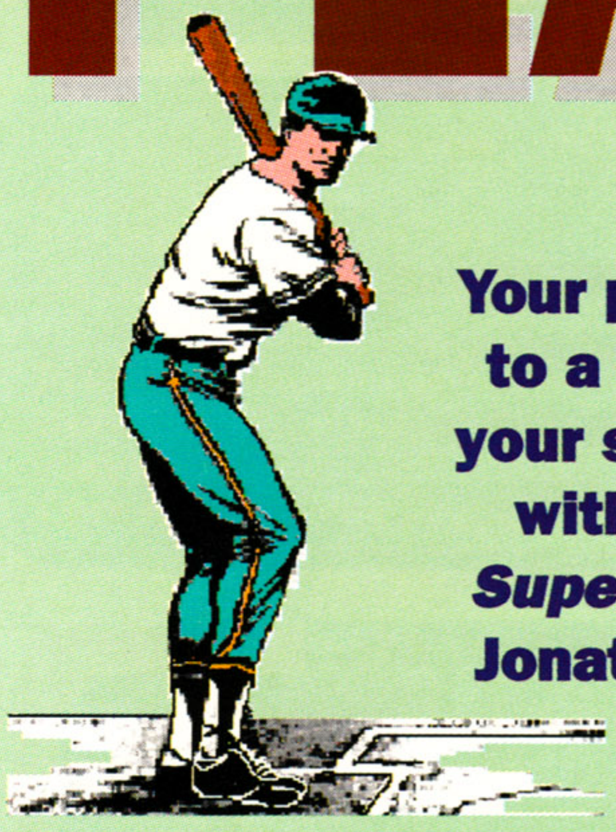
● Jonathan Davies

GRAPHICS	SOUND
39%	46%
GAMEPLAY	GAMELIFE
26%	12%

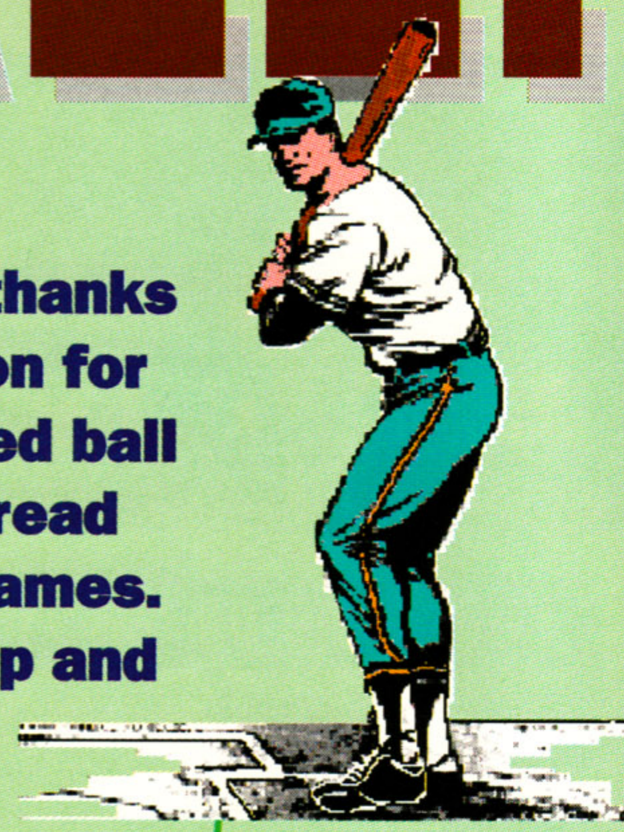
VERDICT: A truly appalling idea for a game (never mind a television programme). The strange hold it had on us initially soon evaporated.

OVERALL SCORE: 19%

PLAY BALL!



Complaints about your foul tip? Your pinch hitter missing out on that bunt thanks to a dead ball? Can't find a scoring position for your squeeze play? Suffering from a trapped ball with... (*Enough! — Ed.*) Then you need to read *Super Play*'s complete guide to baseball games. Jonathan Davies dons his funny-looking cap and steps up onto the mound.



Americans take baseball very seriously indeed. That's something anyone who's ever watched a baseball movie will tell you. Kevin Costner has never looked more sincere than when standing astride that pitching mound in *Field of Dreams*. Charlie Sheen put *Navy SEALs* behind him when he took up the bat for *Major League*. Even Madonna manages some pretence of an interest in the sport in *A League Of Their Own* (her newie).

The Americans aren't the only ones, though. After the Second World War, while the Americans were helping the Japanese put their country back together, baseball somehow made it's way across the Pacific, and the Japanese have been completely bonkers about the game ever since. In fact, it's one of their biggest national sports, along with sumo wrestling.

But what's it all about? What exactly is a Batter's Box? Or a Base On Balls? What should you do if someone asks you to join in with a Seventh Inning Stretch? How *do* you play baseball?

The copy of the official baseball rules we've got sprawls over 104 pages, and doesn't make particularly gripping reading. So here, briefly, is the *Super Play* guide to baseball.

YOU'LL NEED:

- A cylindrical piece of wood, 42" long and 2 3/4" wide – the bat.
- A hard, leather covered sphere – the ball.
- A set of oddly-shaped, oversized gloves, to save the fielders hurting their hands.
- A slab of rubber, and three padded bags – the bases –

NEXT BA

CIRCLE

FIVE THINGS YOU OUGHT TO KNOW ABOUT BASEBALL GAMES

• There's an awful lot of them

Ten, to be precise, with more on the way. That's a huge number, considering there are only a couple of American football games, and maybe three or four 'proper football' ones. Why is this? Is it simply because baseball is so colossally popular in both America and Japan? Or could it possibly be because, compared to other sports games, they're so straightforward to write? (Surely not.)

• They're all the same

Okay, perhaps that's going a bit far. There are ones with good graphics and ones with bad graphics. There are ones with lots of options and ones with hardly any. There are ones that are all in Japanese so you haven't a clue what's going on, and ones that aren't. But, when it comes down to it, they all work pretty much the same and play pretty much the same. That makes picking a 'best one' very difficult indeed.

• They've all got the same tune in

We're not quite sure what it's called – it sort of goes daa daa daa daa da daaaa, daa daa daa daa da daaa – but it's the one they always play at the beginning of baseball games. It adds a certain 'voulez vous coucher avec moi'. (*Er, that's 'je ne sais quois' – Ed.*)

• They all suck

Eek! No they don't! If baseball's your thang, there are loads of top-quality games to cater for your needs. Hence this feature. However, a brief sortie around *Super Play* and its surrounding offices revealed a grand total of one person who genuinely enjoys playing them. (And he works on a Sega mag.)

The problem is, perhaps, that baseball simply isn't very popular here in the UK. Very few people are even remotely interested in it, and even fewer have any idea how to play it. As a result, the word phrase 'baseball game' seems to have become synonymous with 'Aargh! Lemme outa here you weirdos!'.

Since starting on this feature, we've come round to the idea that baseball games might (just might) not actually be so bad. And who knows? Maybe you'll do the same.

• They've all got the same tune in

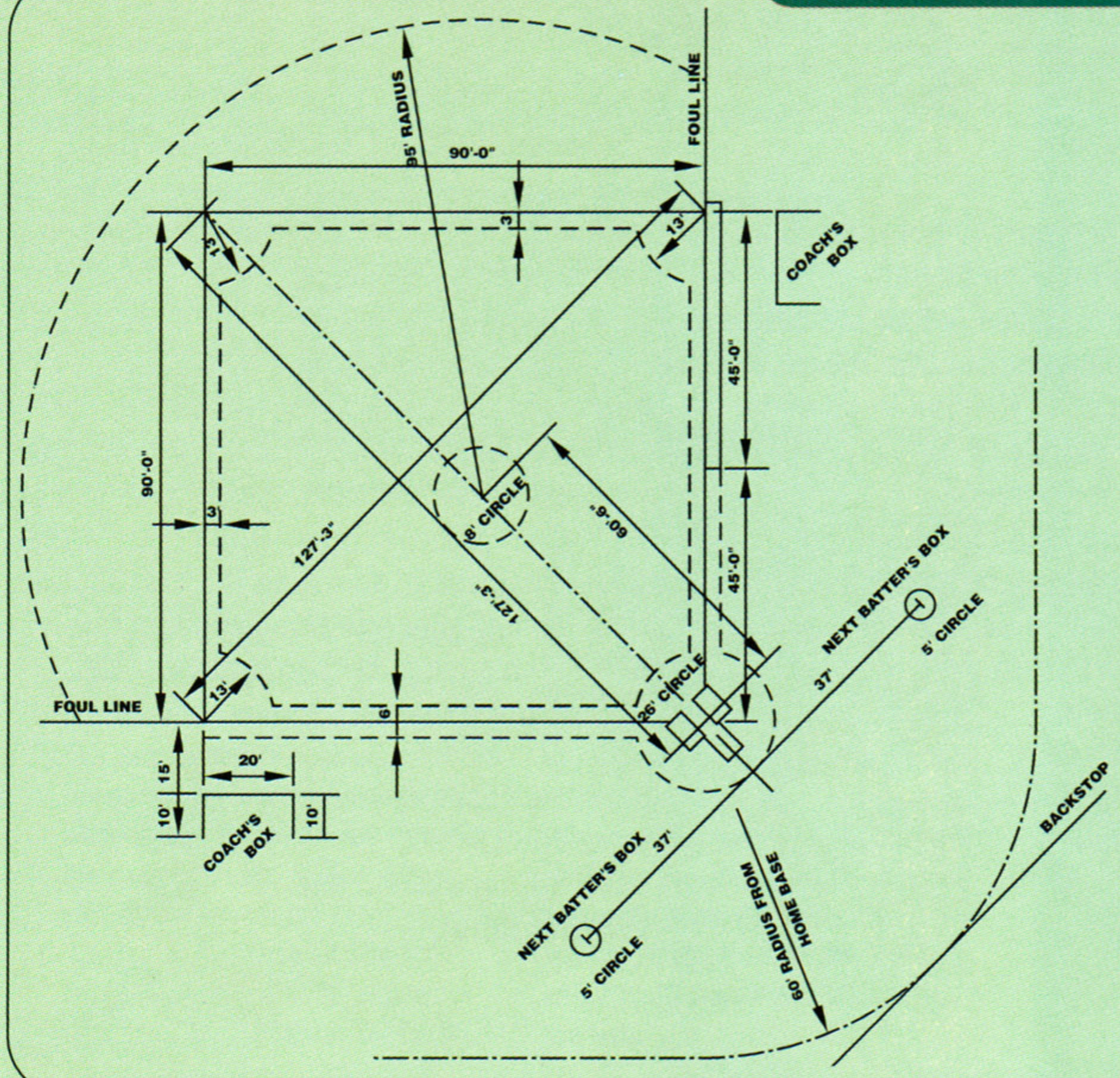
(*We've had that one – Ed.*)

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Can you spot the difference between these two apparently identical baseball games? (Answer at foot of page.)

ANSWER: Actually it was a trick question. They *are* identical. Er, ho ho. (Sorry.)

GLOSSARY OF TERMS



BASE: One of the four posts round which batters must run to score a run.

BATTER: Roughly translated, a batsman. (Rather than something Yorkshire Pudding's made out of.)

BUNT: A particular way of hitting the ball so that it doesn't go very far.

CATCHER: The American word for 'wicket keeper'.

DEAD BALL: A ball that's been hit out of play (into the stands, for example).

DIAMOND: The four bases mark the corners of a diamond.

HOME PLATE: The place where the batter stands. Normally not preceded by a 'the'.

FOUL TIP: A ball that the catcher catches after the batter has hit it.

PINCH HITTER: A substitute batter.

PITCHING: Their word for 'bowling'. The pitcher stands on a mound in the middle of the diamond, 6' 6" from home plate, and throws the ball towards the batter.

SEVENTH INNING STRETCH: Kind of like a football chant.

SQUEEZE PLAY: A complicated version of a bunt.

STRIKE ZONE: The area the pitcher should pitch towards. If the ball's within this area, and the batter misses it, that's a strike.

TRAPPED BALL: When a fielder grabs the ball, but not before it's hit the ground.

arranged in a diamond shape with a mound in the middle.

- Two teams of about 20 players.
- Four umpires.

THE RULES:

- One team bats and the other pitches.
- If the batter hits the ball, he must run, at least as far as the first base.
- If someone's already at first base, he must run on to the next base (and so on).
- If the batter misses the ball pitched in the strike zone, that's a strike.
- Three strikes in a row means the batter's out, and the next one comes on.
- After three batters are 'out', it's the end of the innings and the teams swap over.
- A run is scored by getting a batter round all the bases and back to home plate.
- A runner is out if the fielder on the base he's running to catches the ball.
- If the ball is hit over the boundary, a run is scored straight off. (A home run.)
- The winning team is the one with the most runs at the end of the game.
- There are a few other things, some of them obvious (like catching people out) and more fiddly (like tagging).

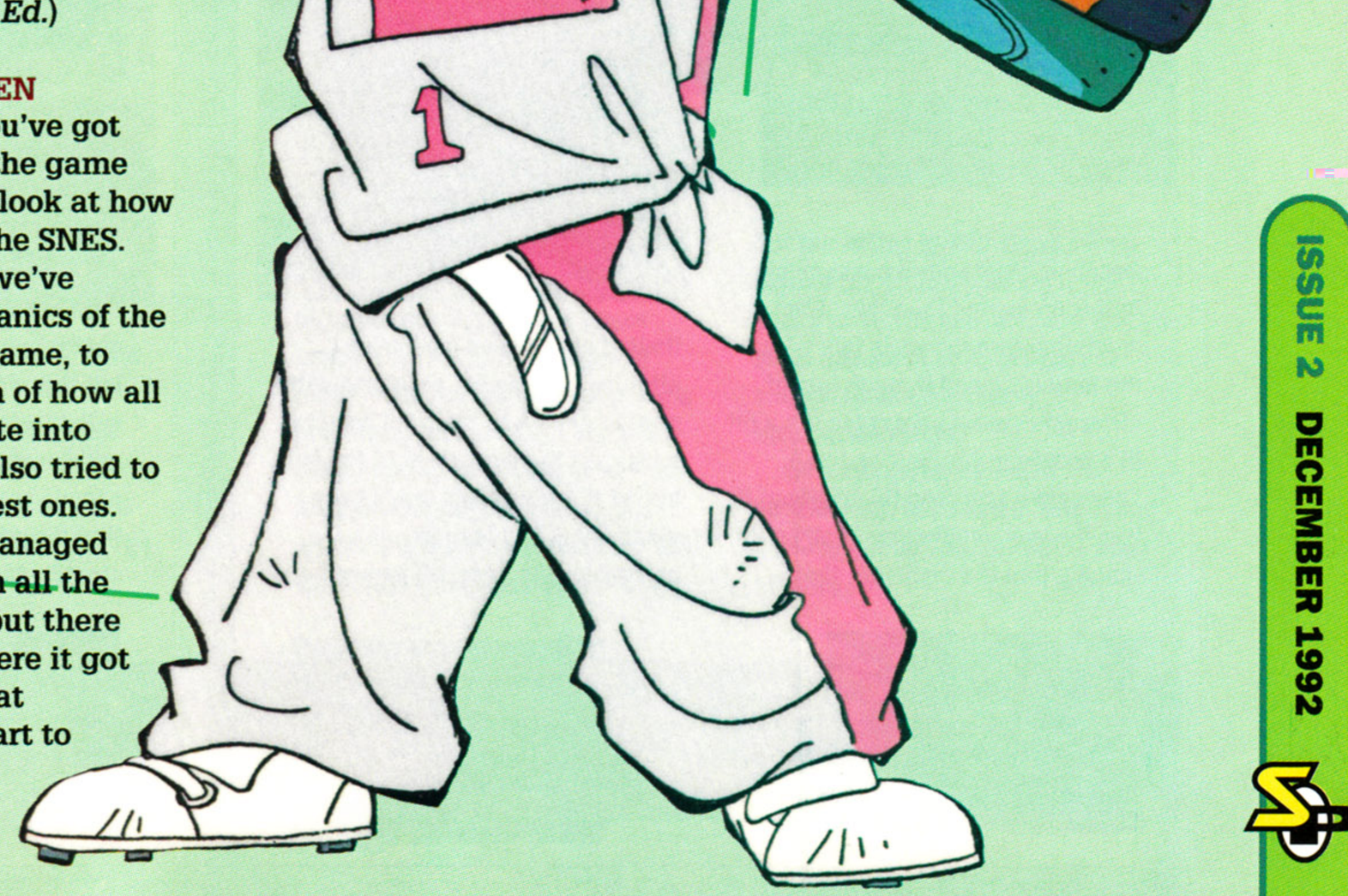
GOT IT?

And that, pretty much, is that. Baseball is quite a bit simpler than it sounds – it's just that the Americans do complicate things so with their ridiculous rules and jargon. Why not drop all the 'tagging' and 'squeeze play' nonsense, lose the cheerleaders, silly music and popcorn, call the thing 'rounders' and be done with it? The stupid... (*Er, just get on with the job, eh? – Ed.*)

THAT'S THAT, THEN

Right, well now you've got some idea of how the game works, let's take a look at how it translates onto the SNES.

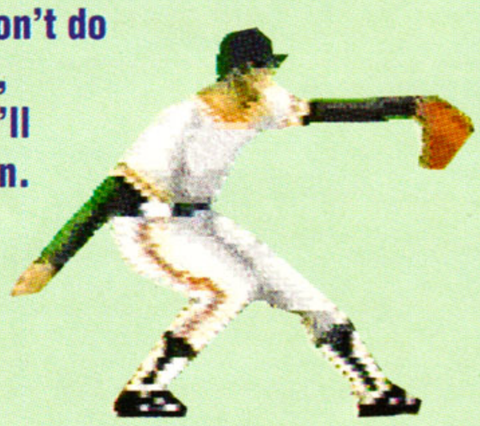
Over the page we've explored the mechanics of the average baseball game, to give you some idea of how all those rules translate into gameplay. We've also tried to weed out all the best ones. Hopefully we've managed to get our hands on all the main contenders, but there are so many out there it got quite bewildering at times. (So if you start to get a bit confused, just spare a thought for us.)



How a baseball game works

PITCHING

If it's possible to introduce strategy into a baseball game, this is the place you're most likely to find it. All baseball games give you some degree of control over where you throw the ball – as well as simply throwing it straight at the strike zone, you can throw high balls, low balls, fast balls and slow balls. The trick is to vary your technique so that the batter never knows what to expect next. The really sneaky part, though, comes when you start throwing balls outside the strike zone. If the batter goes for them – as he most likely will – but misses, it counts as a strike. Don't do this too often, though, as he'll soon cotton on.

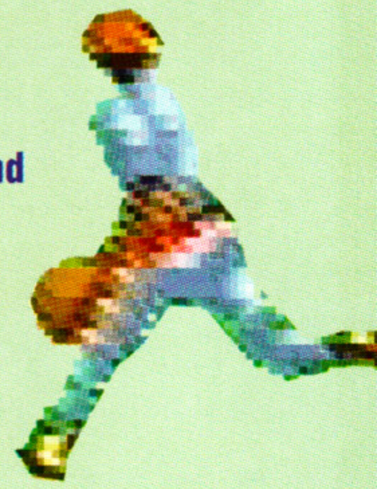


BATTING

This is the trickiest part to get right. Simply hitting the ball at all can be quite a challenge in some games, while the better ones give you some control over where you hit it. You really want the ball to go as far and as high as possible, but not so high that it presents an easy catch to the fielders, and later you'll be able to learn the art of the 'bunt'. Keep an eye out, too, for stray balls that are heading outside the strike zone. If you ignore them, you'll save yourself a 'strike' and notch up a 'ball'. Four 'balls' and you get a free walk to first base.

FIELDING

Fielding tends to be pretty hit and miss in most games. First there's the problem of running after the ball. Quite often the game zooms in so close to the pitch that it can't get the ball and the fielders on screen at once. (That's when you have to resort to the little scanners that most games give you in the corner of the screen.) Then there's the fiddly business of throwing the ball back to the diamond. For one thing you can rarely see which base is best to throw to, and even if you can, getting it there is a real problem. (Usually you press RIGHT for first base, UP for second and LEFT for third).



YES, YES, YES – BUT WHICH GAME IS BEST?

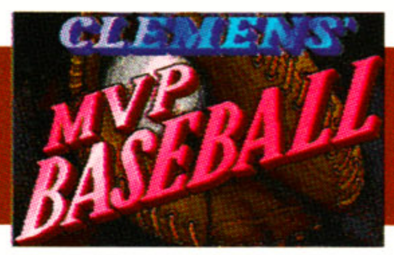
We put all the baseball games we could get our hands on through their various paces...

ROGER CLEMENS' MVP BASEBALL

Below: Baseball players have so much padding stuffed down their trousers (for safety reasons, of course) that they have to stand like this.

ROGER CLEMENS' MVP BASEBALL (LJN/ ACCLAIM)

Baseball games don't come much better presented than this. The animation throughout is fab, with the action viewed through lots of different camera angles (so it's a bit like watching yourself on telly). There are a few crap things about it, like the way people look really silly running into the distance, the limited control you have over pitching, the music, problems with getting people to run from base to base, and the movement of the ball, but on the whole this one's been nicely done and is thoroughly enjoyable. (As baseball games go.)



VERDICT: A few graphical probs, but nice and playable.

73%

EXTRA INNINGS

Extra Innings: too fast to live, too cute to die. (Or something.)

EXTRA INNINGS (SONY IMAGESOFT)

Alternative name: *Ganba League Baseball* (JAP)

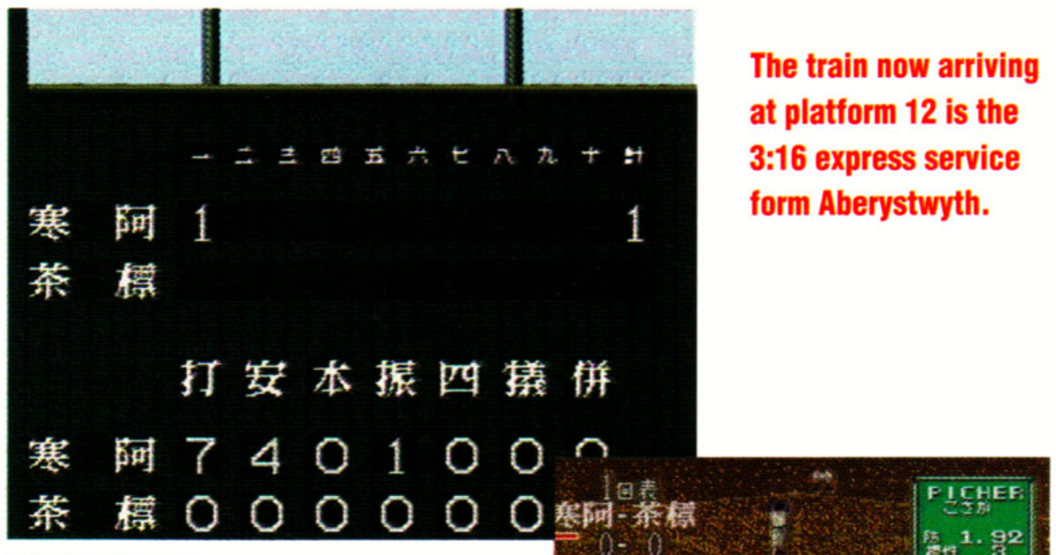
Cute baseball? Yeurch! -Chan style characters are okay and everything, but they don't really fit in that well with the American ideal. Still, being overly cute is the least of this game's problems. The real biggie is that it's miles, miles too fast. It's stupidly fast. That makes hitting the ball a very hit or miss affair – it comes towards you like a cannon ball – and effective fielding is a virtual impossibility.

True, this is all very slick, and good fun once you get used to the pace, but it isn't the definitive baseball game we're looking for here. (But, it *is* one of the best-selling baseball games in Japan.)

VERDICT: Neatly presented, but ludicrously fast.

64%

KOSHIYEN 2



The train now arriving at platform 12 is the 3:16 express service form Aberystwyth.

KOSHIYEN 2 (KAC)

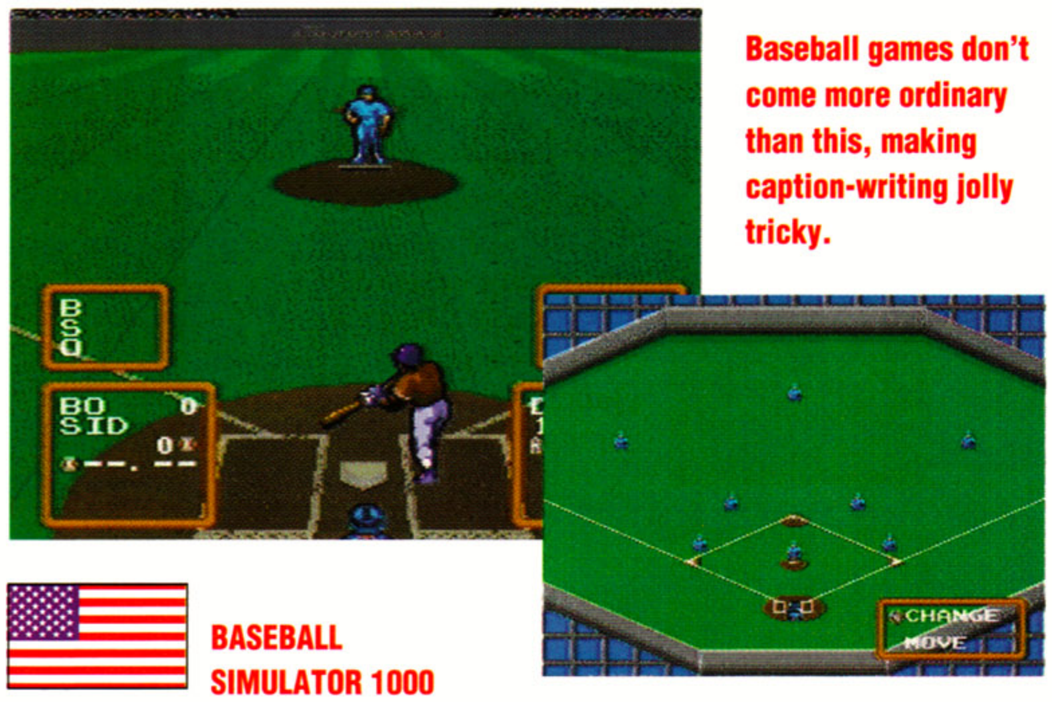
This would probably be the most bog-standard baseball game of the lot... if it wasn't so weird and Japanese. The players bow to each other before the game, and announcements are made in a Japanese accent (except the chap who says 'Strike', who sounds like Kermit the Frog).

The downside to all this Japaneseness is that the whole thing's in, er, Japanese. That makes all the menus and things a bit of a struggle, though seeing as baseball works the same the world over it's not too much of a problem. Not bad, overall (although the fielding isn't too hot).

VERDICT: Very Japanese, very weird, but really not at all bad.

70%

BASEBALL SIMULATOR 1000



Baseball games don't come more ordinary than this, making caption-writing jolly tricky.

BASEBALL SIMULATOR 1000 (CULTURE BRAIN) Alternative name: *Ultra Baseball* (JAP)

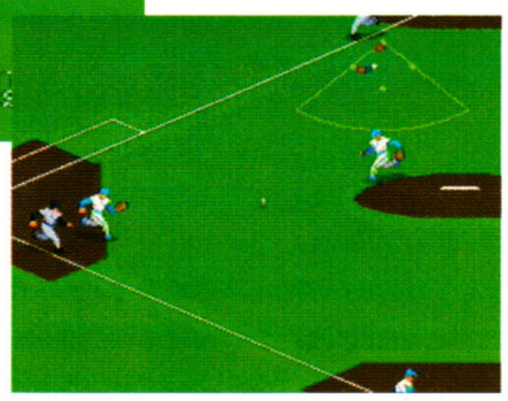
You're unlikely to find a cruder baseball game than this. (Unless you buy *Ultra Baseball*, which is almost exactly the same game.) The graphics look pretty naff, and the intro screens are really dodgy indeed. Playing it is pretty tricky, too. The ball behaves pretty realistically, but due to the absence of a proper 'map', it's very difficult to tell where your fielders are in relation to it.

All *Baseball Sim*'s really got going for it is its music – good, thumping, basebally tunes that drown out the tacky sampled spot effects and ridiculous 'Woooo-eeee-ooo' noise the ball makes.

VERDICT: Too crude compared to the rest, but the music is nice.

49%

SUPER BASES LOADED

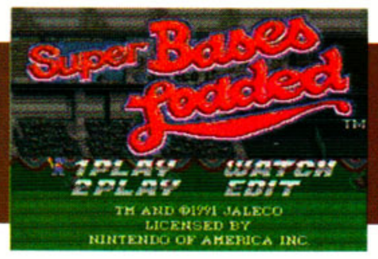


Pretend you're an acorn, growing, slowly, growing, slowly, into a big oak tree. (Well... look, you try.)

SUPER BASES LOADED (US) (Jaleco) Alternative name: *Super Professional Baseball* (JAP)

Super Bases Loaded's most noteworthy feature – and it's downfall – is the way batting takes place from the pitcher's point of view. This makes it incredibly difficult to judge the best time to swing at the ball and, although you do eventually get used to it, it never really looks quite right.

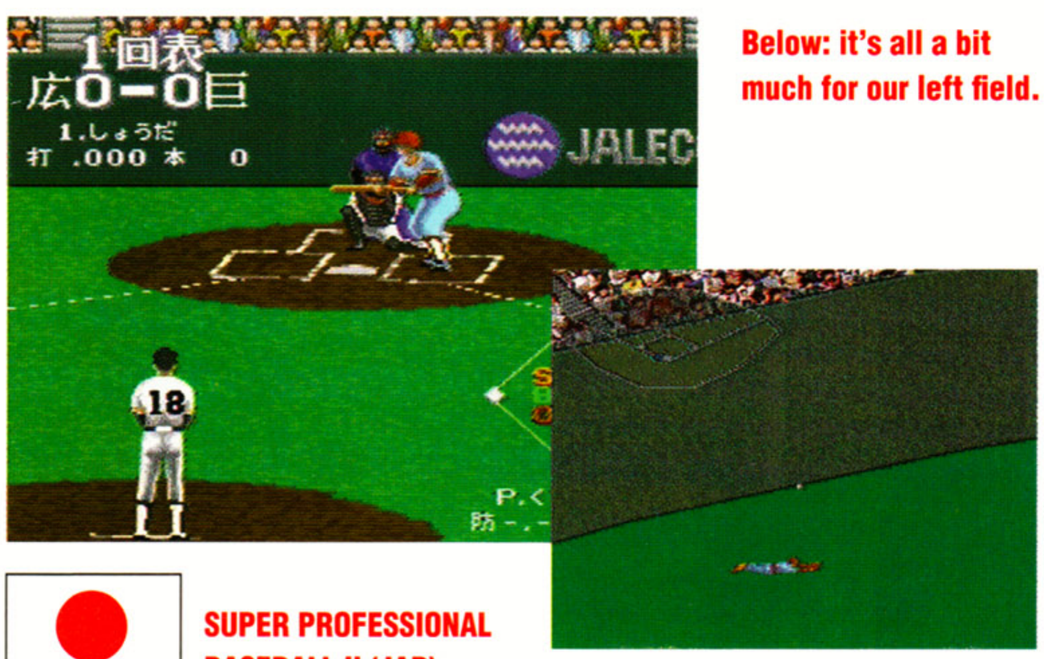
That's one problem. There are others: the graphics look tatty, the ball moves too slowly, and fast and slow pitches both look identical. The sequel is much better.



VERDICT: Scruffy and slow, with a strange way of doing things.

55%

SUPER PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL



Below: it's all a bit much for our left field.

SUPER PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL II (JAP) (Jaleco)

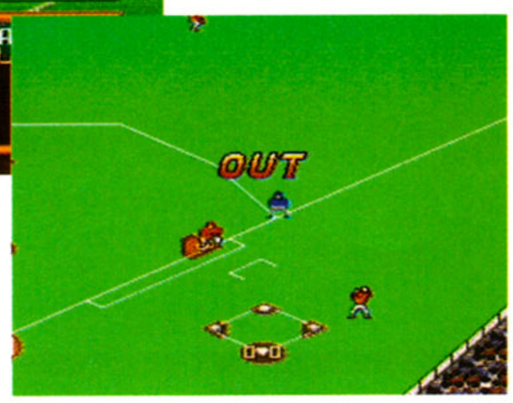
This is actually the sequel, under a different name, to *Super Bases Loaded*. As such, it manages to rectify many of the original game's problems – the graphics are a lot tidier, particularly the crowd – but is otherwise largely similar. It's probably got the most realistic 'ball movement', and spot-on fielding, but the action is still viewed from behind the pitcher making it pretty tricky to hit the ball. Oh, and there's some Japanese in it, though not enough to make it totally incomprehensible.

This is certainly worth considering, but a more 'traditional' game might be a better bet to start off with.

VERDICT: Not bad if you can get used to the unusual camera angles.

69%

ULTRA BASEBALL



Left: *Ultra Baseball* players don't take any chances – this chap's packing a giant inflatable bat.

ULTRA BASEBALL II (JAP)

(Culture Brain)

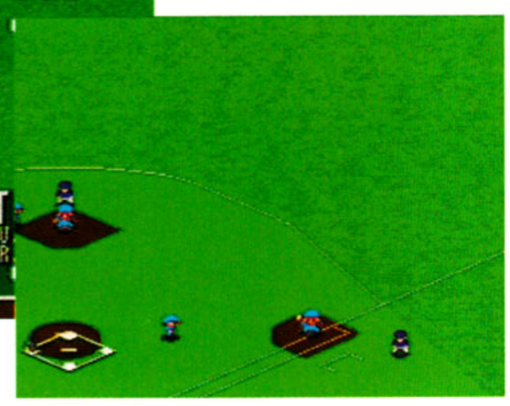
This is the sequel to *Baseball Simulator 1000*, but only makes very slight improvements on it. The graphics are a little smarter, there's a snazzy intro and a little character who shouts encouragement to you between innings, but otherwise the game is unchanged. Oh, apart from the music, which has for some reason been slightly crappified. (The sound effects are unchanged, though.)

As baseball games go, this gets the job done and couldn't be said to be a bad buy, but there are plenty of better ones around if you take the trouble to sniff them out.

VERDICT: Not a huge advance over *Baseball Sim 1000*.

59%

NOLAN RYAN'S BASEBALL



Nolan Ryan: straight or cute? Decide for yourself.

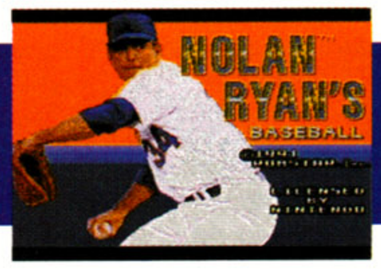
NOLAN RYAN'S BASEBALL (US)

(Romstar)

Alternative name: *Super Stadium* (JAP), published by Seta

Nolan Ryan doesn't try to do anything flash. You won't find any Mode 7 zooming in and out here, or showy offy intro sequences, or anything like that. (There is an intro, but you have to sit and wait for it, and it's not really worth it.) The graphics are smart, but a bit weird – the people can't make up their minds whether they're 'cute' or not. Consequently you might feel slightly conned.

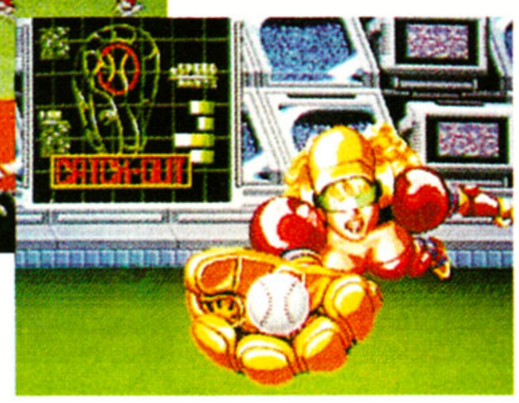
But *Nolan* is a good, solid baseball game. Everything works as it should and, though the computer is occasionally a bit too good for comfort, this is one baseball game that is nearly as much fun with one player as with two.



VERDICT: Smart, slick, solid and really quite good fun.

75%

2020 SUPER BASEBALL



You'd think that by 2020 they'd have found a cure for knobbly knees.

2020 SUPER BASEBALL (JAP)

(KAC)

If none of that lot seems to hit the mark, it might be worth waiting for the Super Nintendo conversion of *2020 Super Baseball*. It's the top baseball game on a flash console called the Neo Geo, and the SNES version is nearing completion.

On the Neo Geo it's brilliant, with really slick graphics and great gameplay. The only thing is, being set in 2020 it's got upgradable, robotic players and mine-ridden playing fields. That means that while it couldn't possibly be accused of being slow and boring, it hasn't got that authentic, all-American baseball flavour.

We'll bring you a full review the second it comes out.

VERDICT: May well turn out to be best of the lot. Watch out for the review next year

?%

WHICH ONE, THEN?

A lesser magazine would probably shrug its shoulders at this point and say something along the lines of: 'Phwoo-er… baseball games? Search me, guv. You pays yer money and takes yer chance. They're all the same anyway…' But not us. No, your appetite's been whetted, your fingers are flexing, you want to play baseball. And you want to know Which Baseball Game Is Best.

Well, *Extra Innings* would be nice if only it took things a little slower. *Roger Clemens'* tries to be adventurous, but its shortcomings are ultimately distracting. *Super Bases Loaded* would be superb if only you didn't have to bat from such a silly angle. So for our money it's got to be *Nolan Ryan*. He gives it to you straight, our Nolan, with smart graphics and perfectly balanced gameplay. What a star.

(It should be noted at this point that recent Japanese magazines seem to rate a new game from Namcot, *Super Family Star*, as perhaps the best baseball game yet, though we haven't been able to get hold of a copy and, indeed, it seems that nobody's importing it into this country at all. If this situation should change, rest assured we'll let you know.)

Oh, and a final word of warning. Don't try playing baseball games on your own – it's extraordinarily tedious. Find someone to play against, though, and baseball can be almost as much fun as *Mario Kart*. (Erm, well, cough, p'raps not quite, but…)

Now, take me out to the ball game!

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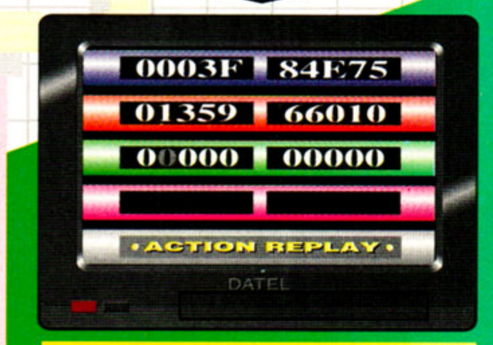

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WINGS II

Not *another* SNES flight sim? Crumbs, that makes two! *Wings II* has the enormous advantage over *Pilotwings* of being World War I based. (They're always the most fun.) But in other respects it's very similar, with its Mode 7 landscape and short, sharp missions. So which is best? Can *Wings* topple *Pilotwings* from the Top Super Nintendo Flight Sim slot? Chocks away...

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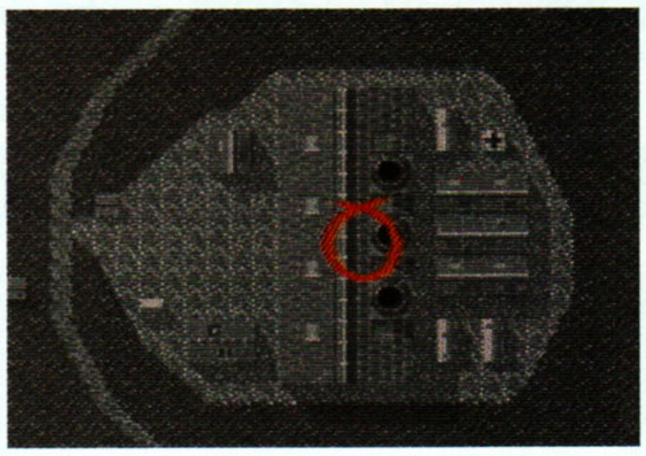
Canadian-born Marcel LeBlanc's only defect is an inclination to speak just like David 'Kid' Jensen.

Irishman Sean Maloney strikes terror into the hearts of the Hun by singing *Danny Boy* very loudly as he goes in for the kill.

John Hargreaves, from Manchester, is 'as tough as a bull', apparently. Sadly, bulls don't survive 100mph collisions with the ground too well, either.

Just as the Yanks were rather late entering the war, Charlie Dexter frequently oversleeps and misses out on all the fun.

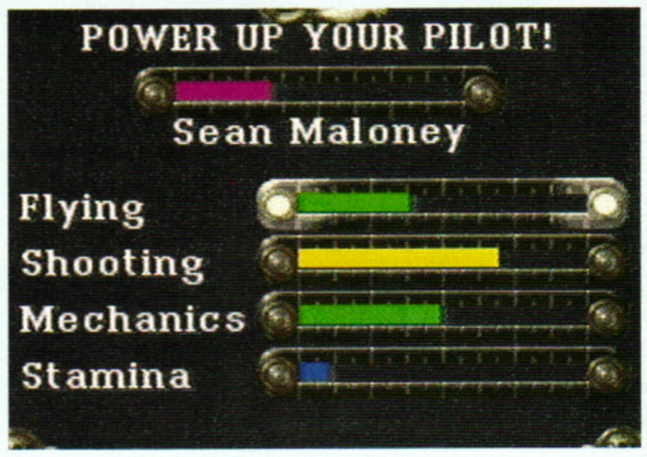
Socialite and bon viveur Lawrence Wolfe joined the RAF by mistake – he thought it was a golf club.



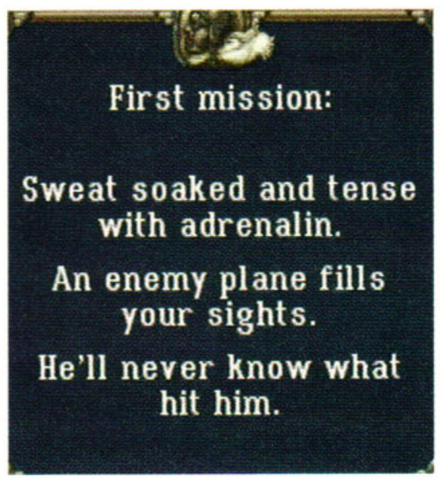
1 Just so you know what you're aiming at, before a bombing mission you're shown a recce shot of the target – in this case a factory. Unfortunately, in taking the picture, the photographer has alerted the Bosche to your intentions, so expect a fair amount of archie.

2 Here we are over the target. (Note the timely switch to an overhead view.) In the debriefing, your mission rating will depend on how close to the factory you dropped your load, and how badly shot up your plane was.

3 Strafing runs are probably the hardest missions to succeed at. You have to fly dangerously close to the ground, so the tiniest miscalculation can spell disaster, and you get very little warning of your target approaching – it looms up out of nowhere and zips past.



4 After successfully completing a mission, you'll be given some 'power points' to allot to your pilot. 'Flying' and 'Shooting' affect his skills in those areas, while a high 'Mechanical' rating means he can repair the plane in mid-air. (And he needs lots of 'Stamina'.)



'Righty ho, sir. That sounds jolly good. I'll get right onto it.'

'That calls for a victory roll!'

US Release

Game: Wings II
(Japanese version: Sky Mission)
Publisher: Namco Hometek Inc
Developer: Namco in-house
Price: Approx. £45
Release: Available now
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

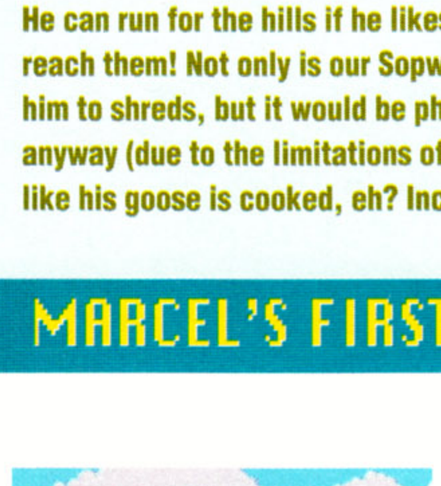
He can run for the hills if he likes, but he'll never reach them! Not only is our Sopwith Camel about to rip him to shreds, but it would be physically impossible anyway (due to the limitations of the game). Looks like his goose is cooked, eh? Incidentally, the name *Wings II* is doubly appropriate. Not only is the game the sequel to *Wings* (which never appeared on the SNES), but every plane in the game has two wings. (Okay, four if you're being pedantic, but at least that's got the caption space filled.)

MARCEL'S FIRST MISSION

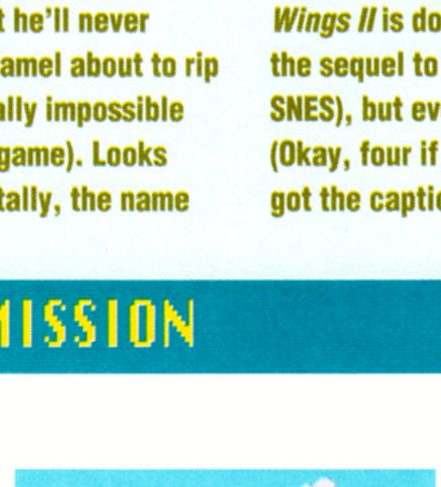
'Nya ha! Gotcha! He's in my sights already!'

'Dakka dakka dakka dakka!'

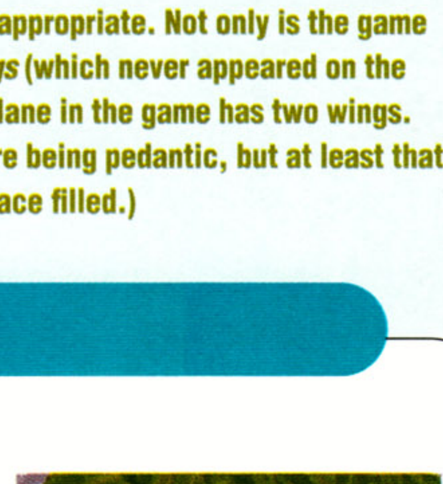
'Kabooooommmmm! Hurrah! Splash one bogie!'



'Yipp... erk!'



Fatoom! (Oops.)



War, eh?

GOOD, BAD OR UGLY?

Now, I won't beat about the bush – in fact I'll bring it out in the open. I think flight sims are great. I delight in having to memorise 300 controls and an entire instrument panel full of knobs and dials. And nothing stirs my passion more than staring at an empty sky for hours while flying to the target, dropping a bomb, flying back to base for hours and then crashing into the runway.

So far, I've been disappointed by the Super NES's contribution to the genre. Just *Pilotwings* so far, with *Super Strike Eagle* on the way. So I was hoping that *Wings II* might be the equal of my favourite flight sim: *Knights Of The Sky* on the Amiga. It isn't, but it's a pretty good game anyway.

For a start, there's no taking off or landing to worry about. In fact, there are no runways to be seen. Or hangers. The only buildings are Mode 7 painted-on-the-ground ones. And the ground is basically the same patch of turf, with a river and a bit of railway track, repeated lots of times, lending the terrain a peculiar tartan quality. In compensation, we're given an attractive mountain backdrop that lends the game a sense of depth. It's more of a 'nice overall effect' than an attempt to capture every detail of wartime France. The game's undeniably attractive – the sort of effect that causes outsiders straying into the *Super Play* office to gasp in awe.

Once you're in the air, though, you quickly stop worrying about trivialities like graphics. The flying is spot on – accurate as well as enjoyable. I'd even go so far as to say that it's on a par with *Knights*. (Well, nearly: you can't loop the loop.) There's dollops of World War I atmosphere, too. The exciting music helps, although it does tend to drown out your engine (a shame), but mostly it's all down to the excellent seat-of-yer-pants dogfighting.

So where does that leave us? Well, this is more of an arcade game that the flight sim I was hoping for, and its limitations will reveal themselves under exhaustive playing. But until then, well... what the heck? As far as it goes, *Wings II* is colossally enjoyable. I think Biggles would have approved.

● Jonathan Davies

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
83%	70%	80%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
66%	71%	

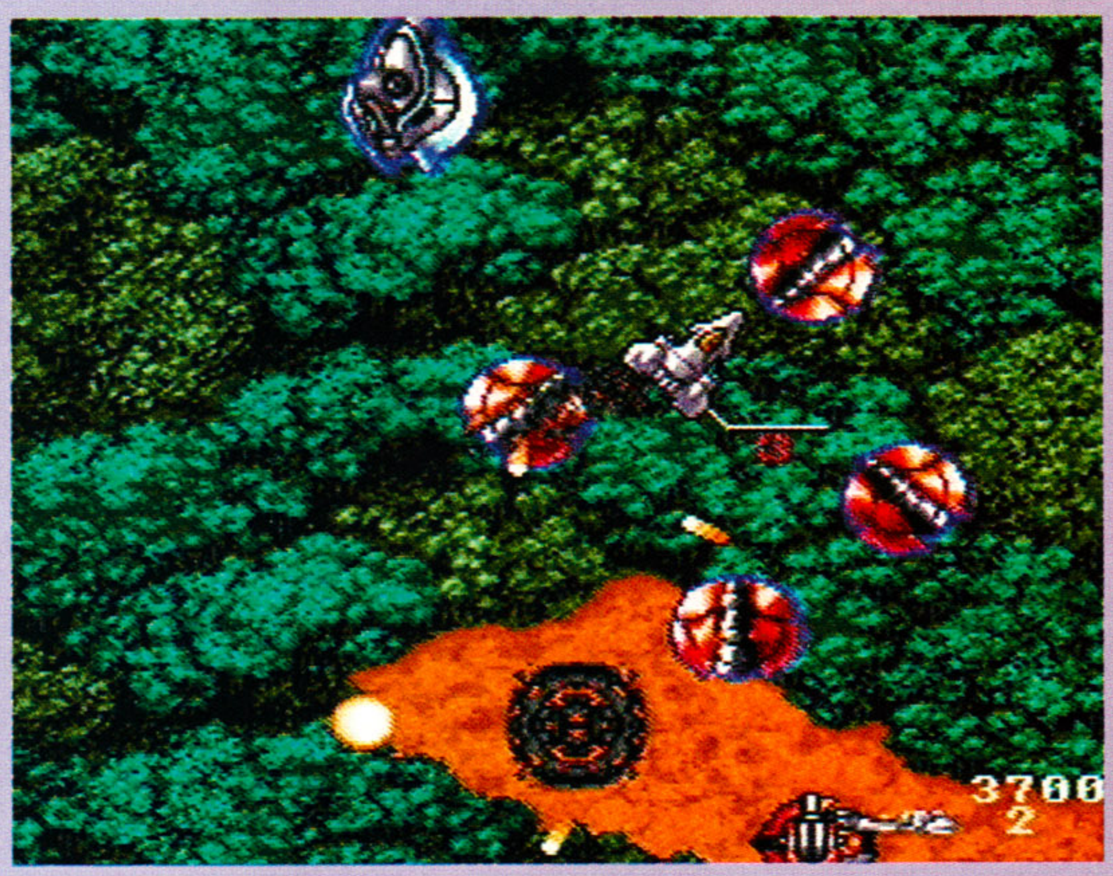
VERDICT: The pictures make it seem more exciting than it is, but they're not that far off. This game's not as varied as *Pilotwings*, and doesn't look as pretty, but it has the massive advantage that you can shoot other flying things. Make up your own mind.

ACROBAT MISSION

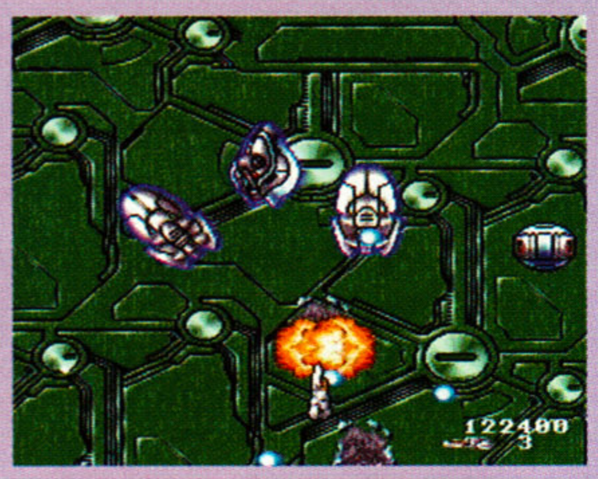
Japanese Release

Game: Acrobat Mission
Publisher: Teichiku
Developer: In-house
Price: Approx. £45
Release: Out now
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

***Acrobat Mission*: it's a mission and, er, there aren't any acrobats in it. There's very little else one can say. (OK, except it's a shoot-'em-up.)**

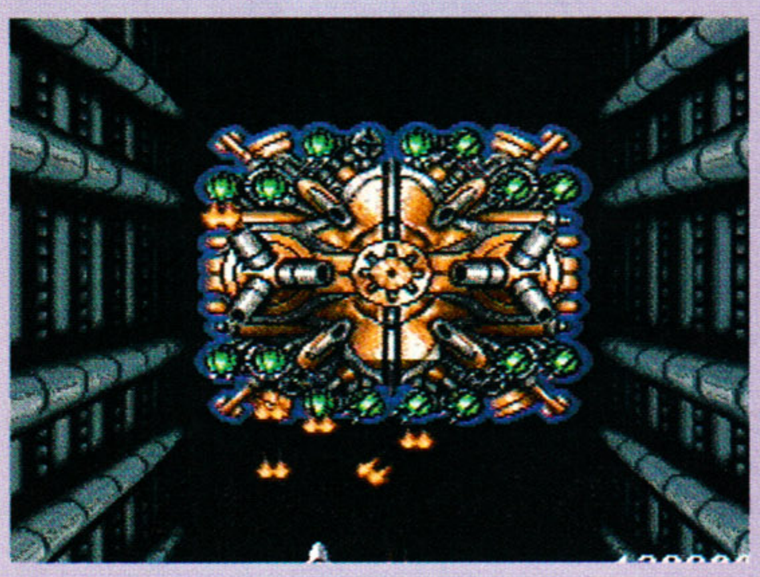


A nice touch is the way that, after your ship's been fatally injured, you can control it for a few seconds before it blows up. So, you can take as many baddies with you as possible, kind of so your death isn't in vain. Beautiful.

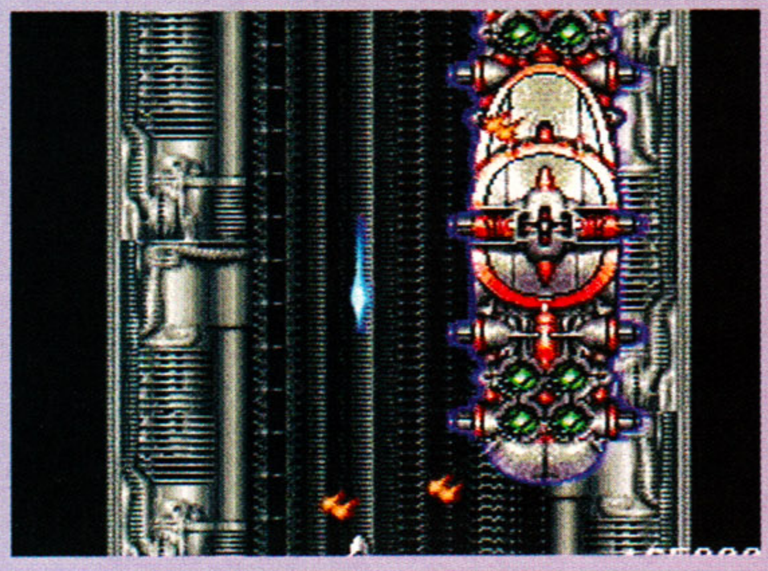


Here you've got to shoot all the baddies. And, er, try not to get hit by any of them.

Again, this bit's a case of shooting the baddies and trying not to get hit by them.



Here's one of the end-of-level guardians. You've got to keep shooting at it until it blows up.



And here's another end-of-level guardian. Shoot it until it blows up. (Much the same as the last one, actually.)

You've probably got the gist of it by now.

GOOD, BAD OR UGLY?

You've already looked at the score at the end, probably. So what's wrong with *Acrobat Mission*?

Well, the first problem is that is looks like a really tacky computer game, and nothing like a Super Nintendo game at all. The best thing you can say about the graphics is that they move really smoothly. And the worst thing? Ooh, there's such a choice. For a start, all the backgrounds are really boring. Usually they consist of the same pattern repeated over and over again. Occasionally they're just a black void. Then there are the sprites, which are all really bland and flat. They don't look like anything in particular, and there's no spaceshippy feel to them. Between-game presentation is virtually non-existent, too. The intro sequence is terrible, and new levels are heralded only by simple,unintelligible textual messages.

The sound is awful, too. The effects are all really limp – again not at all spaceshippy – and the music is just terrible. It sounds a bit like circus music – probably the nearest we'll get to the 'acrobat' of the title.

Finally, the gameplay. There are only five short levels, and they're despicably tedious. You just fire at all these dull sprites that float down, in no particular order, from the top of the screen, and that's it. There are a few end-of-level guardians, but they're just oversized versions of the smaller baddies. Ho hum. Seconds into level one, you'll realise that this is one of the crudest, most unimaginitive, and downright dull games ever. I can't think of anything nice to say about it at all. (Except that it's better than *Wheel of Fortune* – for what that's worth.)

A game of *Acrobat Mission* is a pretty soul-destroying experience, and isn't to be recommended. So, er, don't do it.

● Jonathan Davies

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
45%	40%	35%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
30%		38%

VERDICT: ***Acrobat Mission*** **is a really appalling vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-up. To buy it you'd have to be completely mad.**

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SUPER MARIO KART

OR: HOW TO WIN BIG

By Jonathan Davies

We know people who've looked at *Super Mario Kart* briefly, decided it looks quite nice but there's not all that much to it, then walked away. In our book they've just made their biggest gameplaying mistake of the year – there's a lot more to *Super Mario Kart* than initially appears to be the case. Your first clue (beyond the simple fact that it's a *Mario* game, and there's always more to a *Mario* game than first appears) is the manual. This is very helpful, explaining most of the basics well, but unfortunately doing it all in Japanese! (Unless you've managed to get hold of the American version, that is.) Bit of a problem, that...

What you really need, then, is some sort of 'complete playing guide' that'll unravel in plain English the finer points of the manual, while throwing in a few all-new tips of its own. And that, amazingly enough, is just what we've got here. Who knows, maybe if you show this to your not-that-impressed-with-*Mario-Kart* -chums, they'll begin to see the light...

Who's The Best Character?

To ascertain this for certain we've given them all a thorough road-test, and eventually came to the conclusion that there's no overall 'best' character to pick. Sorry.

Instead, it's really up to you to decide which one is best suited to your needs. If you're a beginner, you'll want someone who doesn't go too fast, and doesn't keep crashing, while more experienced players (or complete show-offs) might be looking for something a little racier. Here are a few pointers to help you decide:

Fastest Character: Kong

The general rule is that the slower a character is off the mark, the faster he'll eventually go. Kong has the slowest acceleration... but the highest top speed. And he builds up so much momentum that he barely slows down at all if he goes off-road or hits someone else. Bowser is pretty much Kong's match when it comes to this sort of thing, but who wants to play a baddie, eh?

Character With Best Road-holding: Toad

Decent road-holding means you won't have to slow down for anything but the sharpest corners. Toad clings to the road like a long-lost friend, so you'll barely have to ease off the gas at all. He also excels when it comes to those sneaky hand-brake turns, using the L and R buttons. (See later on for details of them.) Toad's closest match when it comes to road-holding is Koopa, but exhaustive testing revealed Toad to have the edge (just about).

Toughest Character: Kong

If you see Kong drawing up alongside you, say your prayers. If you're playing him, however, his bulk means you can use him to barge your way through the competition, although, like all the other characters, he'll lose a coin each time he crashes.

Characters To Be Most Wary Of Being: Kong And Bowser

But why? They're fast, and don't take any nonsense from anybody. Yeah, but they're also really tricky to steer, and if they crash it takes ages for them to get going again. Our advice is to leave them till you get really good.

So Come On, Who's Best?

Oh, all right. Well, like we said, it's all very subjective, but we tended to get on better with Toad. He's pretty nippy when it comes down to it, and his roadholding skills come in jolly useful. As you become more accomplished, however, you may well want to try out Kong.

WHAT DO ALL THE PICK-UPS DO?

GREEN SHELLS

These are unguided, and once launched will shoot off until they hit something, and then rebound and shoot off in another direction. To maximise your chances of scoring a hit, make sure you're not steering when you fire them.

RED SHELLS

They're the business, these. They home in on whoever's ahead, almost invariably scoring a direct hit. They do occasionally go astray, though, particularly if there's someone just behind you for them to lock onto by mistake.

COINS

This is good for two extra coins, thus making you go a bit faster. (For a full explanation of what coins do, see the separate box.)

FEATHERS

Feathers make you jump really high. This is handy for time-saving jumps over corners, dodging obstacles or

even leaping clean over fellow competitors' heads.

STARS

These'll give you a few seconds of invincibility, during which time

anyone you collide with will come a cropper. You'll also speed up quite a lot.

Collect coins to make you go a little bit faster. And protect you against crashes.

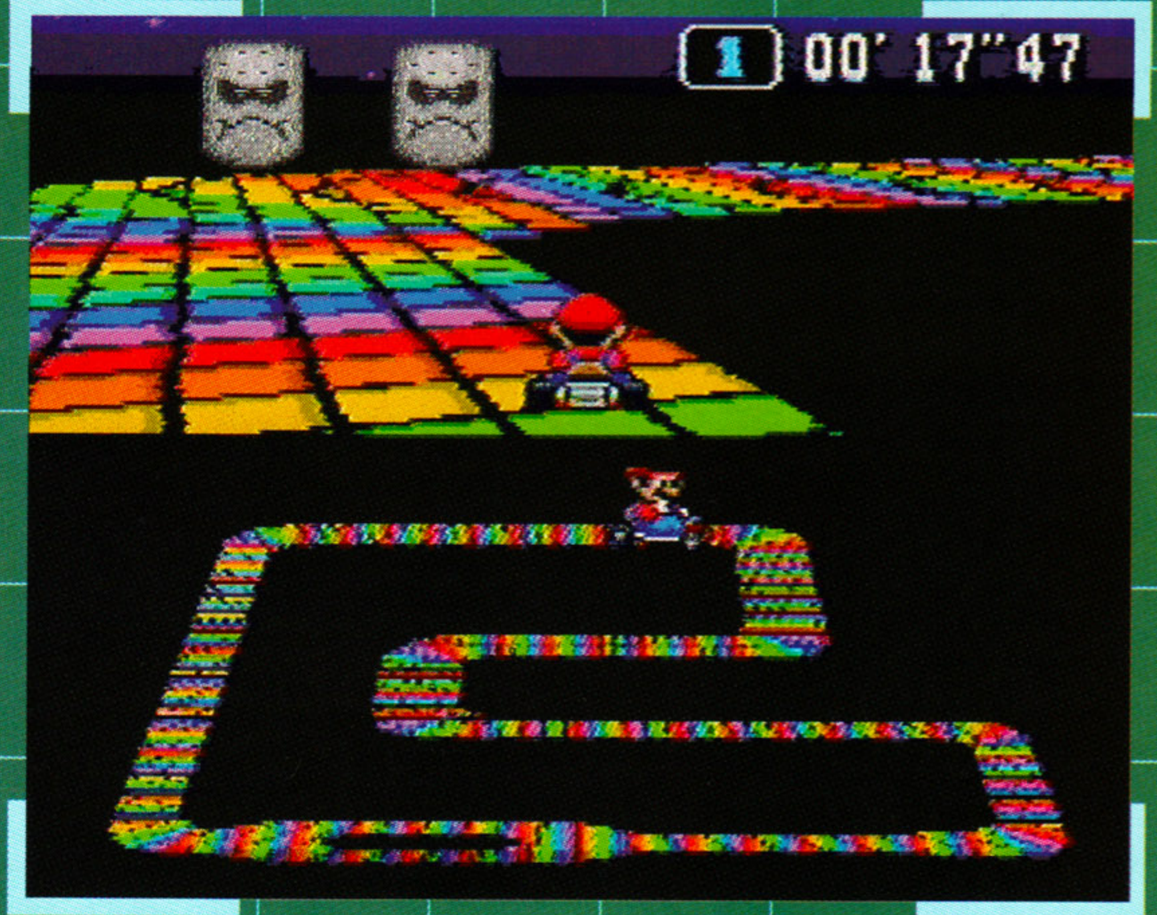
What Do The Coins Do?

This stuff's all in the manual, and should be fairly obvious even if you don't read Japanese. What coins do, basically, is increase the top speed of your kart. The more coins you've got, the faster you'll go. They also act kind of like shields, protecting you against collisions with other karts. You'll lose a couple of coins each time you crash, unless you haven't got any at all, in which case you'll spin and crash. So try to collect as many coins as you can.

What Does That 'Fourth Option' Do?

Ever wondered what that indistinct fourth option is on the level-select screen? Well, here's your answer. It's a secret fourth level that can only be accessed if you notch up a gold cup on each of the three preceding levels. Now, getting there won't be easy. The main obstacle in your path will be getting a gold cup on the third level – the Star Cup. On the last couple of courses of this level the other characters will drive like the wind, and do everything in their power to screw things up for you.

But if you reckon that's



Blimey! What's this? It's the first 'Special Cup' course, and it's really, really hard.

BANANA SKINS

Drop these in the path of the enemy to trip them up. Tip: use your rear-view mirror to get the timing right. Oh, and if you're about to run into one yourself, either jump over it or dislodge it with a green shell.

GHOST

If you get one of these, press 'A' to give you a random object.

MUSHROOMS

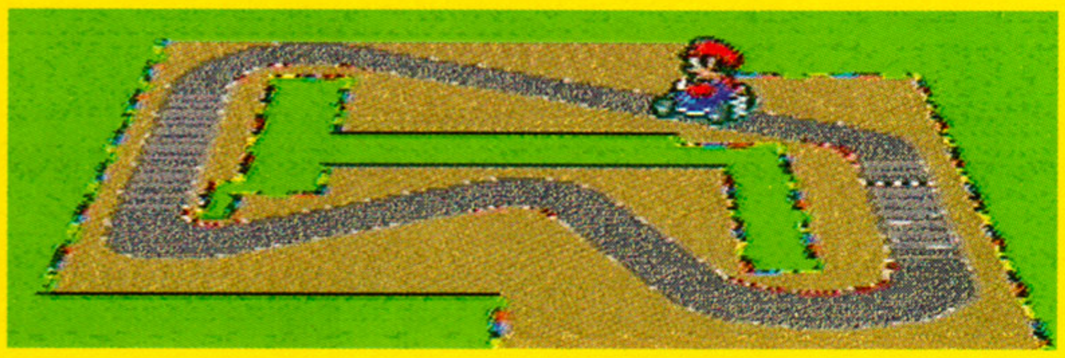
These don't do much, other than give you a temporary burst of speed. Save them for that edge-of-your-seat sprint for the finish line.

LIGHTNING

Possibly the best of the lot, if you manage to make the most of it. This temporarily shrinks everyone else down to miniature size, so you can squash them.

MUSHROOM CUP

Mario Circuit 1



Easy peasy, this one. Just hold down the accelerator all the way round. (In fact, it's courses like this that make you wonder whether all this 'players guide' business is really worth the trouble.)

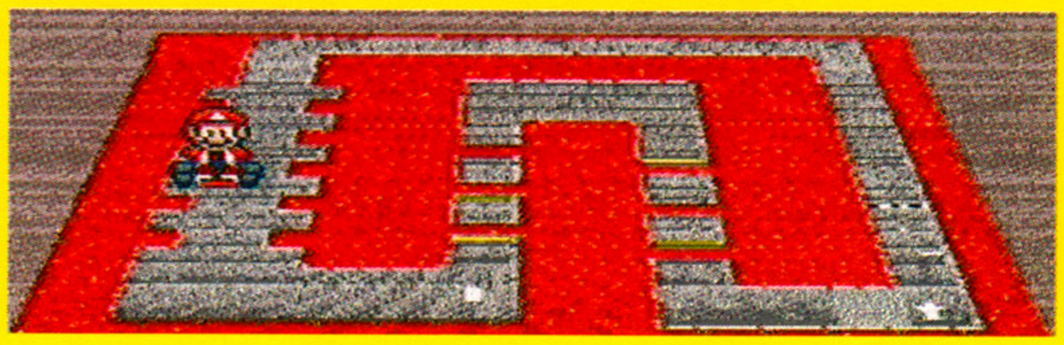
Donut Plains 1

This one's a doddle, too, although there are a couple of rather tight corners. Cheats can make use of the sneaky short cut on the right-hand side of the map – instead of going round that wiggly bit, just nip through the fence.

Ghost Valley 1

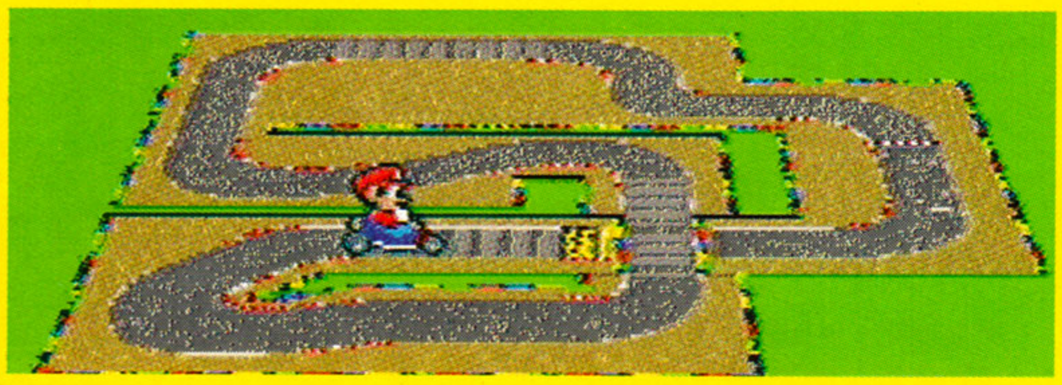
Watch out for the edge blocks, which disappear after you've hit them. There's a smart short cut across the thin plank bit that'll save loads of time, although you'll need a feather or mushroom to get onto it.

Bowser Castle 1



The 'Thwomps' (blocks-with-faces that rise up and down) don't become active until the second lap, so you're okay till then. Try to get into the habit of driving between them, rather than risking going underneath.

Mario Circuit 2



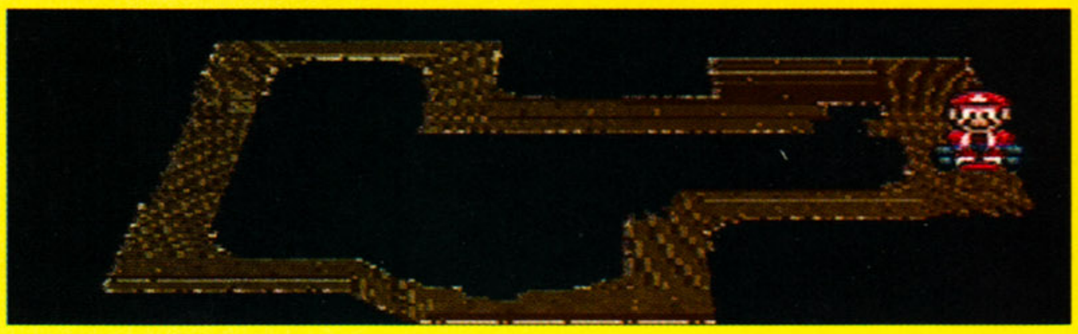
Rather than hitting the jump head-on, steer to the left quite a lot and you'll cut the corner. Better still, use a mushroom just before you hit the jump, and, if you get the angle right, you should be able to land near the starting line.

FLOWER CUP

Chocolate Island 1

The pools of mud (or chocolate, or whatever) will slow you down horribly, so avoid them at all costs. The stuff at the side of the tracks is even worse, so avoid that, too. And watch out for the man-eating plants.

Ghost Valley 2



At the beginning of the long straight there's a yellow arrow that'll save you loads of time if you manage to hit it – it's well worth slowing down on the corner just before it for this purpose.

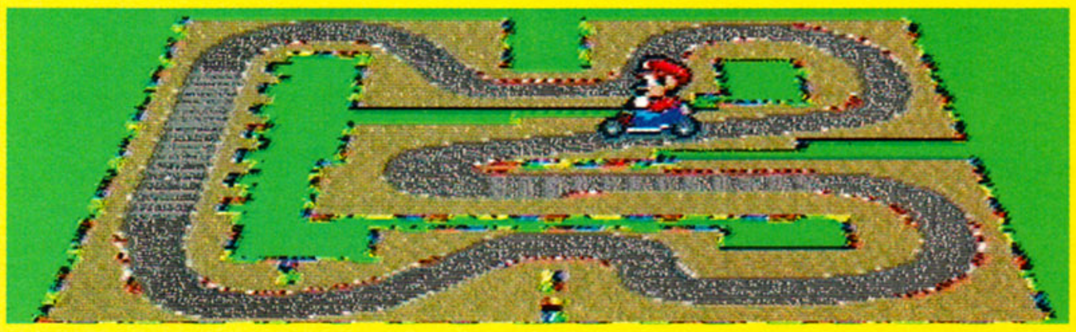
Donuts Plain 2

Other than the dangerously sharp bends, which really need slowing down on, the main problem here is the moles. Avoid their holes if you can, but if you do find one adhering to you, jump up and down a lot to shake it off.

Bowser Castle 2

There's a handy short cut here where the sign says 'Stop'. You'll need a feather and precision timing to use it, although even if you screw up and land in the lava you're likely to make a time saving. Oh, and this course is really hard.

Mario Circuit 3



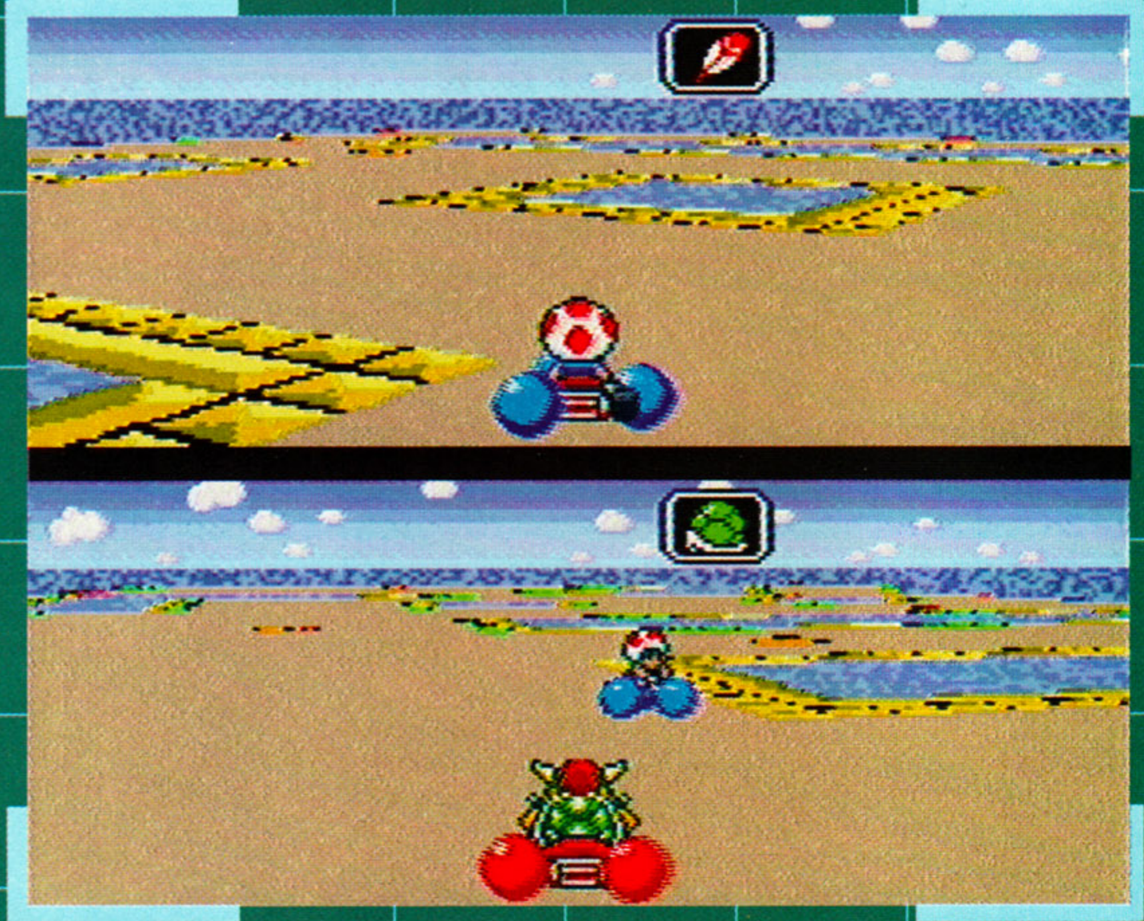
Not too difficult, although that hair-pin bend might throw you if you don't slow down enough. There's a short cut much like the one on Donut Plains 1 down at the bottom of the map. You'll need to go cross-country to use it,though.

SUPER MARIO

tough, wait till you reach the Special Cup... (The second course – the one we eventually gave up on – is a particular bast.)

And Then What?

If, by some incredible feat of gameplaying skill, you manage you win gold in the Special Cup, you'll then find you can have a crack at a special 150cc race. We, er, didn't quite get this far.



The *Mario Kart Battle Game* is *Super Play*'s top two-player game of all time.

Right, Er, Anything Else?

- Don't forget that if you hold the L or R button while turning you can induce a sort of 'handbrake turn'. This takes a while to get to grips with, but it's well worth the effort as you'll be able to screech round corners without having to slow down..
- If you're flashing (after using a star) you can bash through green and red drainpipes. This doesn't achieve much, but takes making a special detour around them.

Mario has just shaved 0.02 secs off his lap time using the 'hand-brake turn'.

- If you collide with a mole, you'll slow down horribly. Shake them off by pressing the L or R button lots of times really quickly.
- Don't hold down the B (accelerator) button while waiting for the green light. If you do, your wheels will spin and you'll waste time. At the earliest, press B when the second red light comes on, or thereabouts.
- Or try the *Super Play* Hot Tip below.
- After driving over a yellow question mark square, you can press A to select whatever's currently flashing past in your 'what you're holding' window. This is exceptionally useful if you're in a bit of a hurry, as you won't have to hang around while the game makes its mind up. It also saves that edge-of-your-seat wait.
- If you crash head-on into a wall, keep pressing jump really quickly as you accelerate and steer – it looks a bit daft, but you'll be able to get back onto the road much quicker.
- Look out for short-cuts. We've indicated a few course-specific ones, but even where there isn't one it can often save time to go off-road and cut corners. (Especially if you're a heft character like Kong or Bowser.)
- Er...
- That's probably just about it for *Mario Kart* tips.

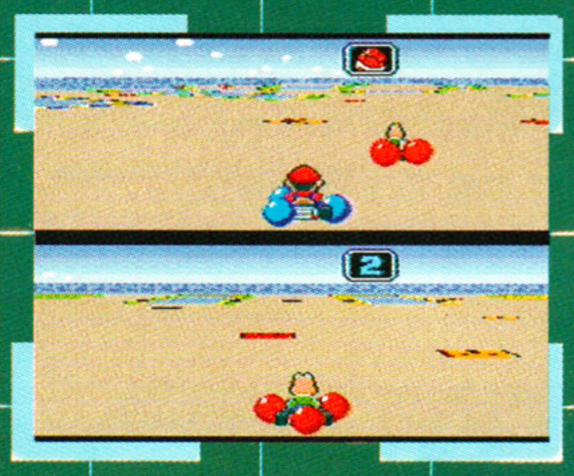
KART (Continued)

And What's This 'Battle Game'?

This is the bit where the first person to pop the other player's balloons wins. It's our favourite part of *Mario Kart* and a good reason for buying the game in itself. And here are a few tips for it:

- If you pick up anything other than a red shell, dump it quick and carry on looking.

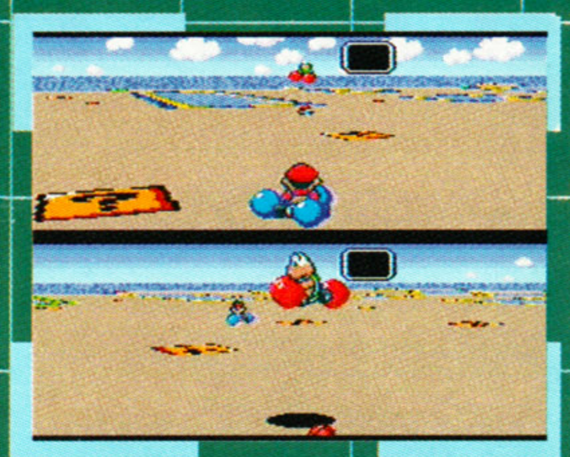
- With that in mind, make sure you make full use of the 'pressing A as soon as the selector thingy starts flashing' tip outlined above.



Mario's got a red shell already! How *does* he do it? (Ah ha!)

- Keep checking to see what your opponent's up to. In particular, make sure you're the first to know when he gets hold of a red shell. (So you can avoid it or nick it with a ghost.)

- Ghosts don't behave in the same way as they do in the normal game. They actually let you nick what ever the other player's carrying. And they make you invisible to the other player for a few seconds, too. They don't make you invulnerable, though, so don't go getting all cocky.



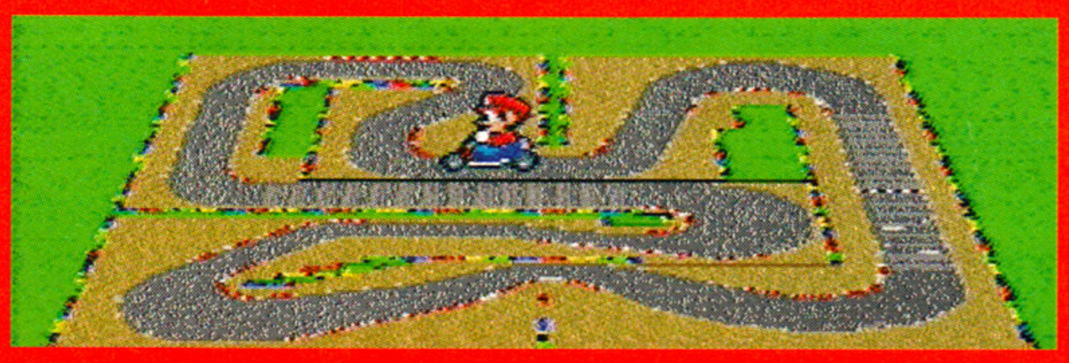
He fires, it homes in, but Koopa jumps right over it! Incredible!

- Okay, so he's got a red shell, and is hot on your tail. What do you do? Well, if you've got a feather, you're laughing – just wait for him to fire and, just before it hits you press A. If not, well, all's not lost. It is possible to jump over red shells using the L and R buttons, but you've got to time it just right. Another sensible move is to make for the nearest wall as fast as possible. If the shell just misses you, it'll hit the wall and vanish rather than swinging round and locking on again.

- The ultimate buzz in the *Super Mario Kart Battle Game*: nicking your opponent's red shell off him using a ghost and then shooting him with it.

SUPER PLAY HOT TIP

(Here's one it would takes you ages to work out for yourself, but it can be incredibly useful...)



For a super-fast start, try this: As soon as the first red light comes on, press and hold B. Then, when the second red light comes on, briefly take your finger off B and press it again. Hold it until the green light comes on, and then briefly release it once more. When you press it again for the last time you should shoot straight to the head of the pack. This is a bit fiddly, and it might take you a few goes to get it going properly. But it does work. Honest.

STAR CUP

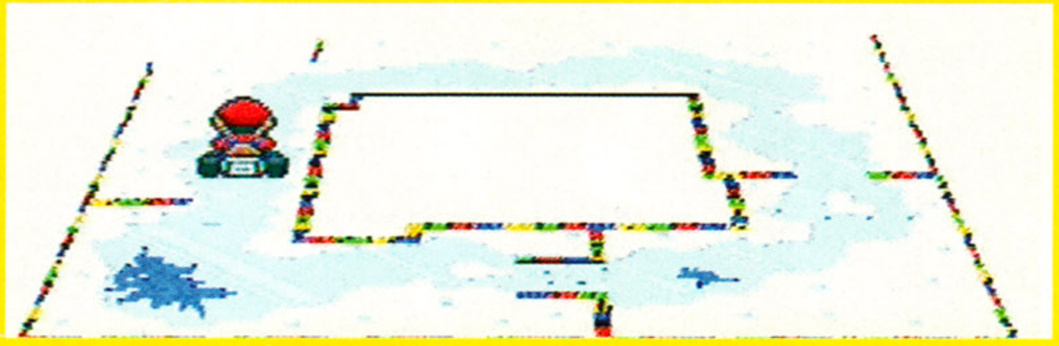
Noco Noco Beach 1

Here's what to do: Drive round and round as fast as possible. Avoid the green seaweed (which slows you down) and the fish (which make you crash). Jump over narrow strips of water, but plough straight through wider ones.

Chocolate Island 2

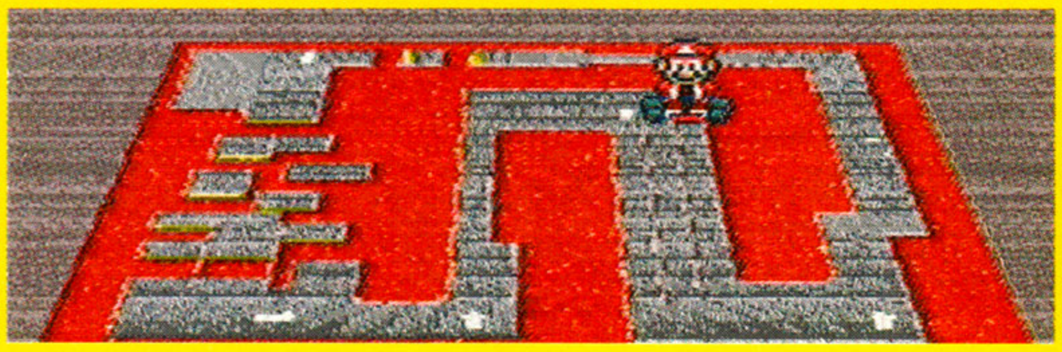
Where there's that huge expanse of mud, head for the dry patch in the middle – it'll stop you slowing down so much, and you'll net three extra coins. Watch out for Princess Daisy, who tends to drop cakes on the narrow stretches.

Vanilla Island 1



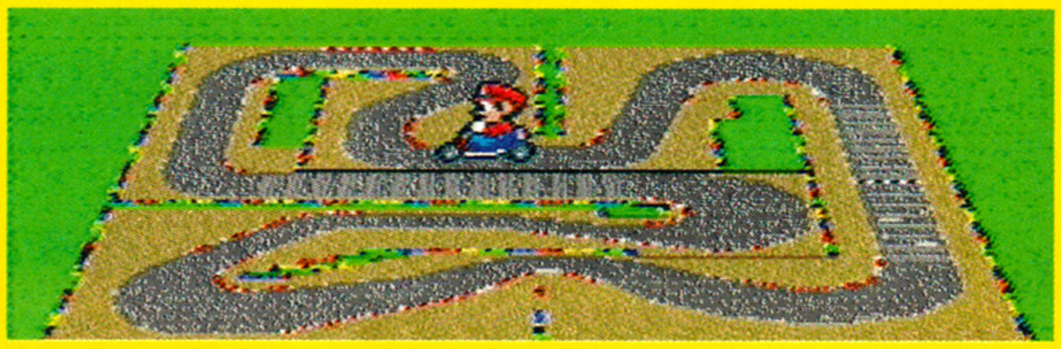
A really slippery one. Watch out for the little white squares – though if you knock away as many as you can on your first lap, it'll save time later. If you find yourself heading for that hole in the ice, use jump or you'll fall in.

Bowser Castle 3



The Thwomps are incredibly annoying on this level – there's not much you can do except avoid them. On the bit with the three long thin lanes, aim for the one furthest away – there's a yellow arrow on it.

Mario Circuit 4



The final challenge (for the time being) and an extremely tough cookie to crumble. The road is impossibly bendy – it's worth sussing out that L and R button business. And the other characters really pull out all the stops here!

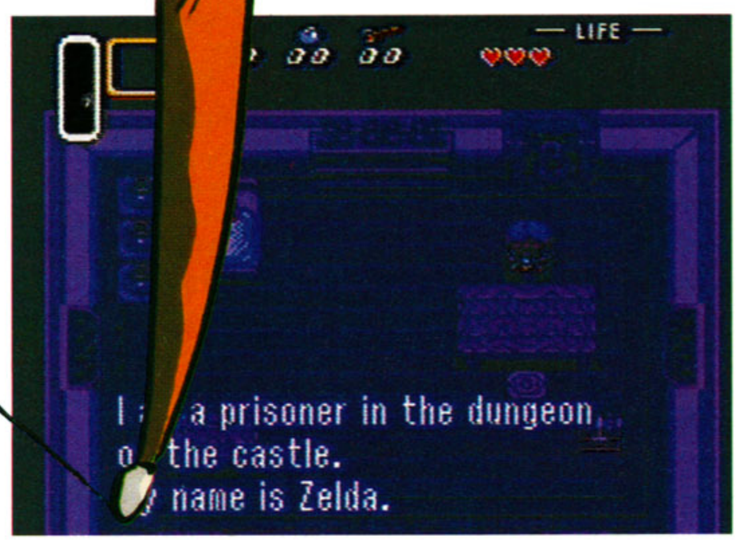
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA -A LINK TO THE PAST

UK Release

Game: The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Nintendo of Japan
Price: £39.99
Release: Available now
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit + BB

Apparently comedian Robin Williams became so hooked on the NES *Zelda* games that he named his daughter Zelda! (Considering the game character's 'come kidnap me' image, this is perhaps tempting fate a bit for a major movie star!) You think he's mad? Start playing *Zelda III*, first, and you get an inkling as to why...

LINK'S FIRST STEPS: THE RESCUE



Link gets woken from his sleep by Zelda's cry for help – she's been kidnapped *again*. Link's beginning to get a big hacked off with having to rescue her all the time (after all, this is the third game!). 'Oh bloody hell, this is getting ridiculous', he grumbles, 'why can't she just keep out of trouble?'

'Oh brilliant, it's raining, too. What if I get struck by lightning or hacked to bits by soldiers? I don't know, she expects me to get up in the middle of the night and go trudging off through the mud, facing all sorts of dangers...' Love's young dream doesn't seem to be running too smoothly...

I bet you never knew Link was a keen gardener? Taking a breather from his rescue mission, a spot of weeding reveals a secret passageway underground. Jumping into it, Link finds a weapon.

Link's path through the dungeon includes some spiral steps that he can negotiate with ease. He's getting close to the princess now – indeed, he thinks he's getting close to the end of the adventure.

Once you've sprung Zelda from her cell, she obediently toddles along behind you like a little dog as you attempt to find your way out of the palace. (Now why can't I find a woman like this?)

SEARCHING FOR THE PENDANTS: THE EAST PALACE

The first task expected of you after Zelda has been safely returned to the Sanctuary is the recovery of three pendants. One is lying deep in the East Palace protected by six baddies. One is in the Desert Palace guarded by three serpents, while the other lies at the top of the mountain guarded by a giant Wurm. Each one is protected by a nasty boss which you must first dispose of. After retrieving the first pendant the Pegasus boots are given to you by Sahasrahla – these allow you to charge at baddies and walls and generally leg it around at high speed. Link finds the Power Glove on his way to the second pendant – with this you can pick up huge rocks.

The East Palace contains lots of room with locked doors. It's your job to work out how to open them. (I bet you never expected that, did you?)

Sahasrahla tells you that you need to find three pendants (surprise, surprise) before obtaining the Master Sword. Luckily the first one isn't too far away.

The Elder's grandson is a useful contact in Kakariko village – he marks the position of Sahasrahla, the wisest of the wise in Hyrule. It's worth noting that these chickens can be picked up and thrown about a bit – a great laugh, though they don't seem to like it much.

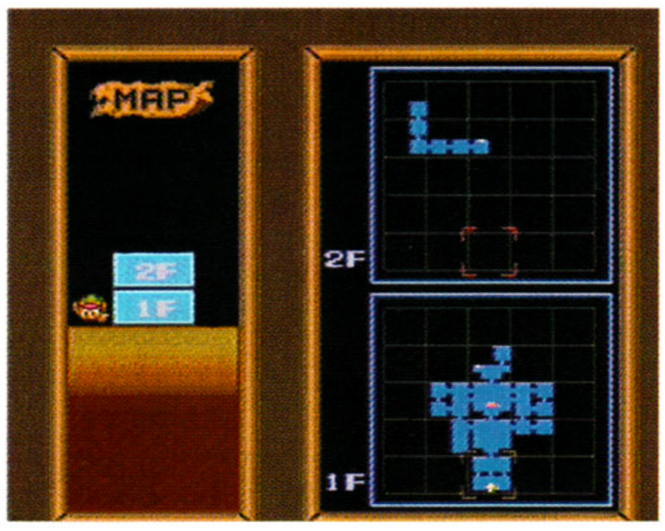
The first pendant boss: kill these six nasties and the pendant is yours. This is a lot easier than it looks, especially if you're armed with bow and arrows.

Hurrah! Here's the Courage Pendant – the first of three that need to be recovered if you're going to get your hands on the Master Sword.

CARTOGRAPHY IN THREE EASY STEPS

Rather than leave Link floundering about, not knowing where he's required to go next, these maps (which appear throughout the game) highlight important places as you progress. Hyrule may not look huge, but it's amazing how much is squeezed in – rather like the boot of a Mini.

A doubting *Amiga Power* journo looks on as you traverse a less attractive area of the game: 'That looks crap' he says. A quick press of the X button and a fab scroll around this map in Mode 7 is enough to send him scuttling back to his Amiga. Depressed.



Very useful when negotiating the dungeons, this one – once you've found it that is. A compass highlights unchartered routes and the position of the dungeon boss is also marked. It's all so easy – at first.

SECRETS IN STORE

It would be impossible, and undesirable, to list all the surprises that lie in store for Link on this adventure – there are so many, and anyway, they wouldn't really be surprises then, would they? Rest assured, though – just like in *Super Mario World*, there are countless little secret rooms to find.

Once the Power Glove is found, Link develops the strength of an ox. What could possibly lie under this rock...?

This is what: a naughty vagabond, who (mysteriously) doesn't do anything when you nick all his gear – loads of rupees.

Bombs away! As well as pulling up bushes, throwing chickens,and causing general mayhem, Link's an explosives expert!

LINKS IN THE CHAIN

Where would Link be without lots of little thingies to use? Inside the excellent manual are descriptions of all of the different objects he encounters throughout the game. Here are what a few of them look like:

The sword is the first weapon, given to you by your uncle. It powers up *R-Type*-style.

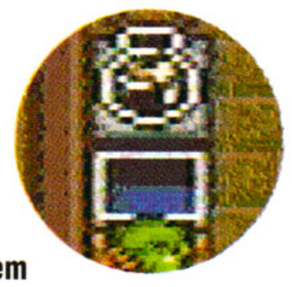
The green book found in the library had to become useful at some point! The translated inscriptions reveal the entrance to the one of the palaces.

This bow is a jolly useful weapon – once you've found some arrows, that is. You can fire them at baddies. (*One more caption like this and you know the consequences – Ed.*)

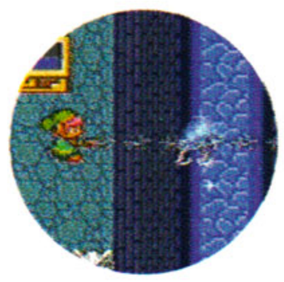
The Magical Mirror transports you between the Light World and the Dark World. It also sends you back to the entrance of the dungeon when used in there.

The Pegasus boots give Link the ability to charge through things. It's also a speedy way of getting around the place.

The Magic Hammer is used to pound stakes and things into the ground. It's also a weapon.



A bottle like this is extremely useful for keeping fairies and bees inside. You can catch them using...



The Hook Shot. Excellent for crossing holes and also for hitting baddies.

...the bug-catching net! Link doesn't just like gardening, he enjoys collecting bees.

The shovel is used to dig up certain areas when searching for all sorts of special things.

One of the best areas in *Zelda* for me was this wonderful little sub-game that lets Link take part in a Duck Shoot. Pay the man a few rupees and five arrows can be fired at the ducks that scroll past. If you continuously score accurate hits without the arrows hitting the foreground (*Yes, I think we all know how to play Duck Shoot – Ed.*) your prize money accumulates fast. It's so enjoyable that I spent around half an hour in here alone! Unfortunately I came out penniless and couldn't afford to buy anything else for ages!

The fearless Link doesn't care about getting wet. Zora's waterfall includes a pair of flippers to help him get around in lakes and rivers and ponds and...

GOOD, BAD OR UGLY?

If I said 'Hands up who likes RPGs?', how many of you would own up? Even if you don't, the tell-tale signs are unmistakable. First, there are the blood-shot eyes – the result of being shut away for weeks, amassing hit points and casting spells. Then there's the whiff of 'Eau de unwashed', accompanied perhaps by an anorak with a copy of *The UFO Spotter's Gazette* stuffed in the pocket. Some prejudices just won't lie down and die. But these sorts of scathing generalisations about RPG players just don't wash with *Zelda III* – this is one game *everyone* will want to play.

If you think the Robin Williams story at the start of this feature is strange, then what about the Japanese *Zelda* fan who burnt down someone's house in a jealous rage, all because *Zelda III* had sold out before he managed to buy a copy? When I first heard it, it made me wonder just *what* could be so brilliant about the game – people were doing lots of strange things because of it. Now I've played it, I know. *Zelda* is simply as good a game as you could ever hope to see.

Indeed, Nintendo's own games tend to cause a few problems for a niggly old fuss-pot like me – they're just too good. Sure, I could perhaps whinge about the rather simplistic graphics and sound, but I tried that on *Super Mario World* and still ended up giving it an incredibly high mark. It's a similar story with *Mario Kart* – it doesn't look that special on the surface, but underneath lies a game so wonderful that we all love it like a new-born puppy. *Zelda III*'s cut of the same cloth. When games are this good there's not much more you can say than 'buy it.' So I won't. In fact, I think I'll go down the pub now... (*Oh no you don't, matey! You're not going anywhere until this page is filled! – Ed.*)

Ahem. As I was saying, here are some of the things that make *Zelda III* so brill:

The accessibility. It's, erm, very accessible. Although *Zelda* games have always been more arcade adventures than full-blown RPGs, they're very complex arcade adventures. Controls are simple and intuitive – combat is dealt with by a simple button press, while using the collection of items you acquire on your travels is simplicity itself.

Another great thing is Link's ease of movement around the land of Hyrule – vast though it is, it takes no time at all to walk from one side of the map to the other. And the action never slacks. It's virtually impossible that you'll ever be bored.

The variety is astonishing – if you can imagine the same level of depth as *Mario World*, then transfer it to an overhead view FRP location, you won't be far off. The game is packed full of beautiful little touches – for instance, the level of light in underground passageways and chambers depends on how many torches you've lit.

Best of all, though, is the friendliness of it. Your quest never gets confused or bogged down – most of the time you have a pretty good idea of where you should be going, and how to get there. There is one problem with this – despite the sheer size of the thing, it's all so nicely presented and progress is so easy that hardened adventurers will race through the game in a week. Taking the time to explore, however, will get the most out of the game.

What else is there to say? Well, for those who feel the need for a bit of chat about graphical and sonic quality, it's safest to say this is on par with all Nintendo games – it does exactly what it sets out to do. Backgrounds are simple but magical, while the tunes are all engaging and suitable. This version of *Zelda* – the first on Super NES, as I said – has been made especially accessible to attract all those who haven't grown up with the series on Nintendo Entertainment System. As such, it's likely to be a bit too easy for some – real *Zelda* addicts will probably have expected more – but if it converts more people to this landmark series then who's complaining? And I'm sure it will. An essential purchase, then, and arguably the best game yet made available for UK Super Nintendo owners. Who would have thought an RPG could be this much fun?

● Jason Brookes

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
85%	84%	94%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	93%
92%		

VERDICT: A Nintendo-programmed game never tries to be anything more than fun, and *Zelda III* has bags of it. Beautifully designed and 'perfected' the way only Nintendo seem to know how, this is a must-buy – expecially at the reasonable price of £40. Nice packaging too.

ZELDA: LOOKING BEHIND THE LEGEND

First on the NES, now SNES and Super Famicom, the *Zelda* game series is among the biggest selling ever. But why?

Well, the original NES versions of *Legend Of Zelda*, the first game, were released in Japan and the US in '87 and '88 respectively, where they combined to sell over 7 million units. In fact, the US market swallowed up even more copies than the RPG-crazy Japanese – a remarkable feat, considering that back then the American NES market was about a fifth of the size it is now, while the Japanese Famicom market had been growing steadily since '83. With the release of the sequel, *Zelda*'s popularity grew even more.

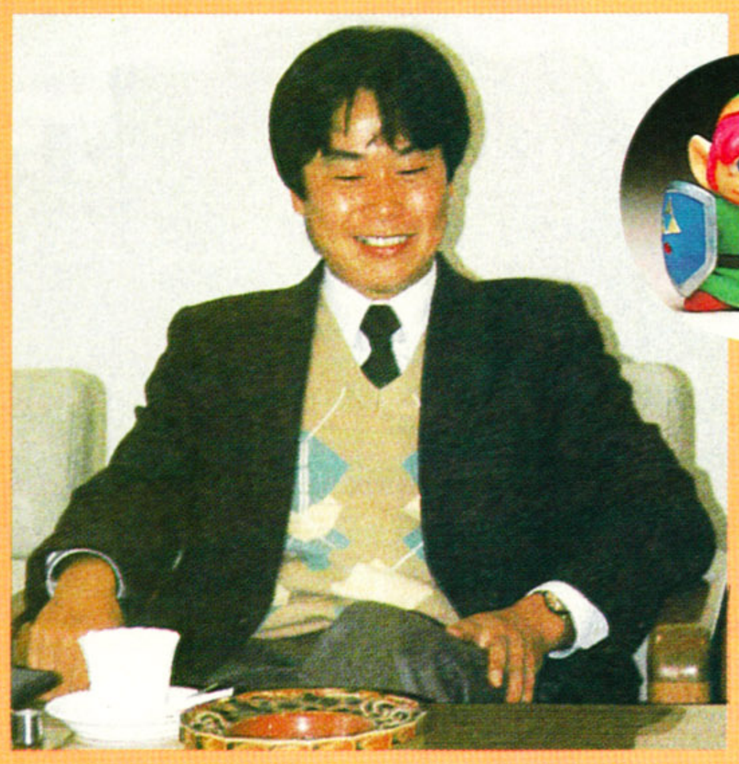
And then came the Super Nintendo. Anticipation for the 16-bit debut of *Zelda* was enormous – partially because of the long wait! The third game in the series was eventually released for the Super Famicom on 21 November 1991, exactly one year after the Super Famicom's release. The game went down a storm.

Then came more waiting. Despite huge demand for an American version, Nintendo held back its US release for six months – building up so much interest that when it finally did appear it sold over 250,000 copies in the first six weeks – faster than any other Nintendo game in history. The man behind the games is designer Shigeru Miyamoto...

Above: *The Legend Of Zelda* on the NES. Above right: *The Adventure Of Link*, also on the NES. Right: The Japanese Famicom disk versions of the games, with *Zelda III*.

SHIGERU MIYAMOTO: THE MAN BEHIND ZELDA

Shigeru Miyamoto has the golden touch. He's directly responsible for both the *Zelda* and *Mario* series of games developed at Nintendo's 'Entertainment Analysis And Development' department in Japan, making him perhaps the most important games creator at work in the world today. When a piece of software sells more than 10,000 copies in Japan it is considered a hit, but many Mr Miyamoto has been involved with have shifted millions, as well as become household names worldwide. It all puts him rather in the super-league. Here's a conversation recorded with Mr. Miyamoto earlier this year.



Shigeru Miyamoto: the man responsible for some of the biggest selling games of all time (*Super Mario 3* has sold over 10 million copies worldwide). *Zelda*, *Mario* and *Pilotwings* are just a few of his creations.

What exact role do you take in the games development process?

Miyamoto: I don't actually do any of the programming, but I *am* involved in organising the programming teams. Instead of imposing deadlines, I find that constant encouragement of your staff is the best way to keep them going. Perhaps it's one of the reasons for our success.

Are the Super Famicom and Super NES versions of *Zelda III* the same?

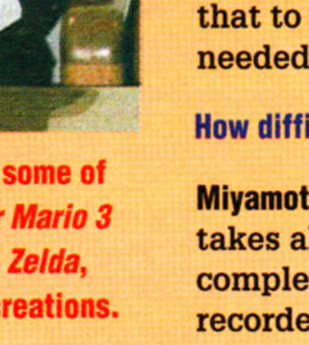
Miyamoto: Because the SFC version completely used up all 8 megabits of memory, we originally estimated that we'd need another megabit to cope with the text being translated into English for the American game. That being the case we'd need a 9 Mbit cartridge for America, but wouldn't be using up all the space on it, so we toyed with squeezing in a few of the spare ideas left out of *Zelda I* to fill up the space. In the event, though, we managed to fit the English version onto 8 megabits anyway, so any ideas like that went out the window. So yes, both versions should be exactly the same.

When was *Zelda III* originally meant to be released?

Miyamoto: We were hoping to release it at the time the Super Famicom itself first came out, back in November 1990 alongside *Super Mario World*. We couldn't make that, so after that a March '91 release was planned, but the project dragged on beyond that, too. Eventually it became a Super Famicom first anniversary release instead.

How many people actually worked on the game?

Miyamoto: We started with just a handful for about a year, but then added more as things progressed. Basically the small team works out a rough draft plan, and the large team refines this into a game.



What kind of things did you have in mind when planning the new game?

Miyamoto: We wanted to improve on all the short-comings of the 8-bit games that had been imposed on us by the technical limitations of the Famicom. In the 8-bit *Zelda* the player had to imagine a lot of effects that the graphics couldn't simulate. Also, back in 1987 *Zelda* had introduced lots of new features to games, like the ability to save your game and buy items, but in the meantime these had become the bog-standard components of any RPG. We knew that to keep ahead of the pack, *Zelda III* needed more.

How difficult did you want to make *Zelda III*?

Miyamoto: On average it takes about 40 hours to complete, but the fastest recorded time at NIntendo is five hours! We've actually tried to make it as easy as possible. The way the game is structured you can't take alternative routes to finish the game, so we've made it that, for example, if you come across a blocked passage you will be able to progress further, even if you have forgotten a certain item. If mainstream games players could cope with less linear adventures, though, we might have made it a lot harder.

Is it true that loads of brilliant ideas had to be dropped because of a shortage of memory space?

Miyamoto: No, we dropped the average ideas and picked the best!

And finally, how about the future?

Miyamoto: I can't discuss new games at the moment, but we've got lots of plans, at least one of which is along the same lines as *Pilotwings*.

●*Thanks to Onn Lee of* Electric Brain *fanzine for his help with this feature.*

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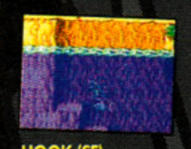

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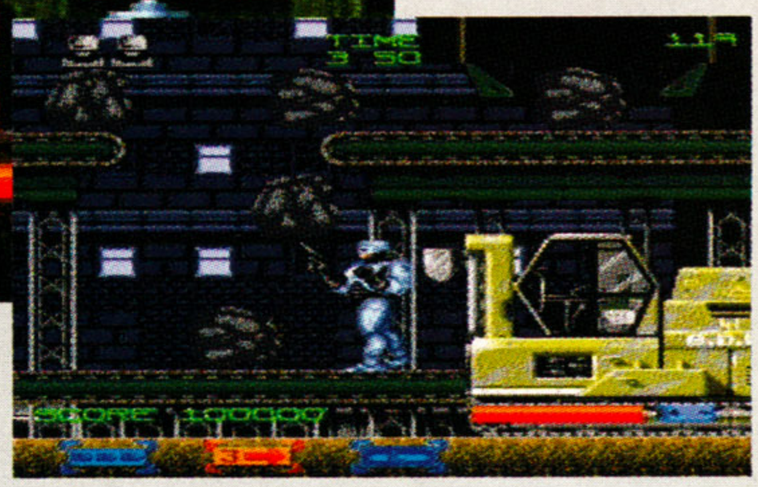
ROBOCOP 3

Buying a film-based game can be risky. In the past, software houses have spent loads of dosh on the latest movie licence, only to find there's nothing left to fund the programming – or so it seems. Consequently, there's a sea of poor games to wade through. Can Ocean repeat the trick they managed with *The Addams Family*, and make *Robo 3 work*...?

UK Release

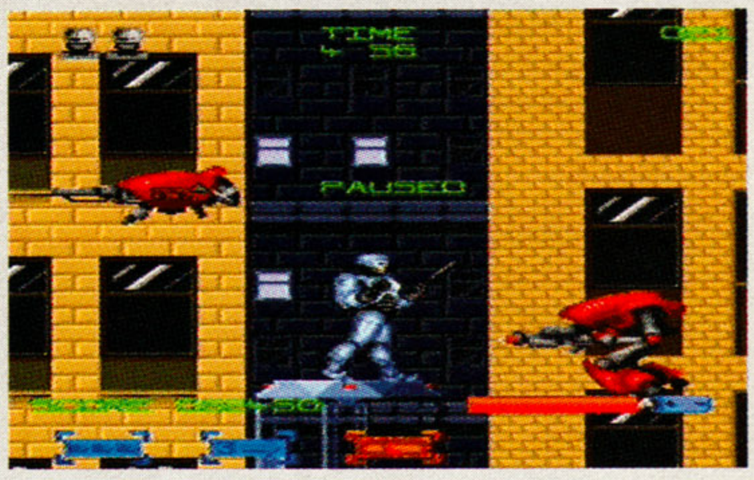
Game: Robocop 3
Publisher: Ocean
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Release: November
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Here we are on level one and Robo's titanium suit can't protect him from those enemy bullets. Hardly impressive technology, is he?



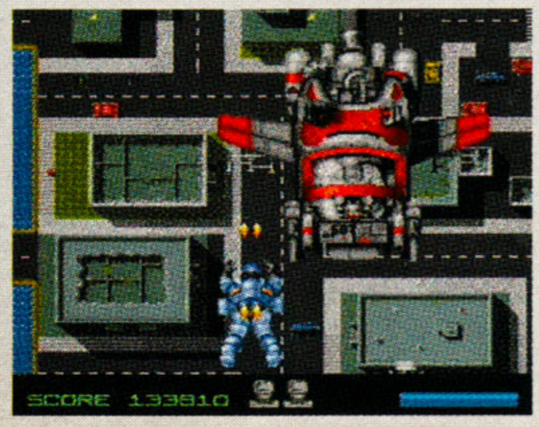
Moving platforms suspended in the middle of nowhere? Not very realistic, are they?

A horrible bit this – baddies advance from either side and if you run out of ammo, you die.

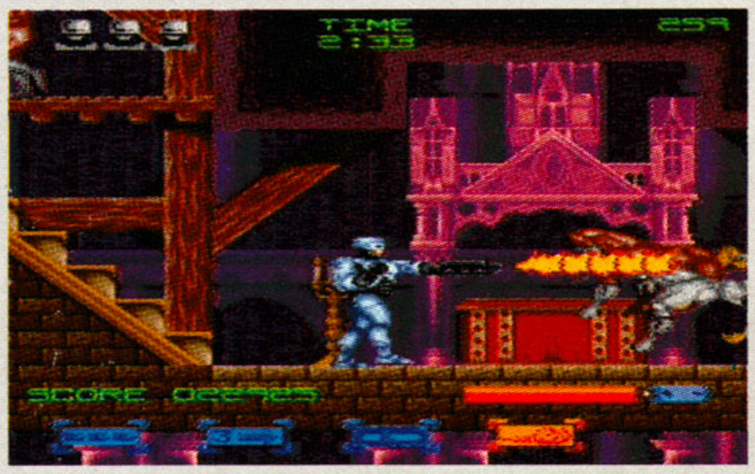


This is tough! Trying to shoot these flying droids that attack from either side isn't fair. (I'm depressed now.)

ED 209 is here to help you this time, but not enough – it's still incredibly difficult.



Level three, and a change in the action as Robo fights 'orrible things like this.



Robo gets nasty on this level, and flames the baddies into oblivion. Keys lie around waiting to be used.

GOOD, BAD OR UGLY?

As a product of the bankrupt Orion film company, *Robocop 3* has had its share of problems – indeed, it may never make the big screen. Maybe that's one of the reasons why the game version really isn't all that good. What seems to be the problem here is lack of imagination – the game's a plodding, very predictable slaughter-fest, which (the flying sequence aside) feels like it could easily be based on *any* of the films. Next to the excellent Amiga *Batman* game of a few years ago, say, or the interesting 3D Amiga version of *Robocop 3*, this is a very forgettable release indeed.

There are other problems. First of all, it's too difficult. It's not just me, either – everybody I know who's played it thought this. Sure, there's progress to be made, but only if you're really prepared to put the hours in. The programmers seem to have decided to just chuck some extra collectable energy in after every really difficult bit to make it possible to proceed, rather than refine the gameplay so this wouldn't be necessary – a lazy way out. And the way slow old Robocop hasn't a hope in hell of dodging enemy bullets is incredibly frustrating, too. Restart points don't seem to have been given much thought either – yep, it's straight back to the beginning if you die.

All that said, however, shoot-'em-up fans with high tolerance levels will get some fun out of this. This sort of mindless slaughter can be enjoyable if you're willing to persevere, or if you're simply a natural games player – those who've put in the effort say you *do* get into it with time. I suspect, however, that most average gameplayers will find it simply too frustrating to get anywhere near that far.

● Jason Brookes

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
74%	78%	54%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
58%		66%

VERDICT: A difficult arcade game that might appeal to real *Robocop* fans, but otherwise proves to be frustrating and altogether unremarkable. It's a real shame there's no digitised speech, too.

TURTLES IV

TURTLES IN TIME

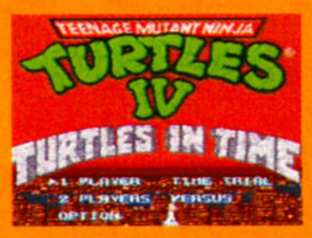
UK Release

Game: Turtles IV: Turtles In Time
Publisher: Jaleco
Price: £44.99
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Above: 'Hey Shr'? Well, that told him, didn't it?
Left: Rafael, supposedly the Turtles' fearless leader, is doing everything wrong. Not only should he be attacking those baddies, rather than leaving it all to Leo, but he's also about to get squashed.

Above: Leonardo's down, but Michaelangelo is next in line.
Left: The 3D racing bit. Watch out for the... Yaargh!

GOOD, BAD OR UGLY?



I've got a *Turtles* watch, a *Turtles* pencil-case, a *Turtles* poster, a *Turtles* lunch-box and a *Turtles* mug. In short, I like the *Turtles*. And I was really looking forward to taking *Turtles IV* for a spin.

But, along with the game came these warnings: 'It's easy to finish'; 'The sampled speech is crap'; 'It looks great, but there's not much depth to it'; 'Your shirt's untucked'.

So what did I make of it? Well, I was bowled over. Not just because I like the *Turtles*, either. The graphics are slick and colourful, and just like watching the cartoon. The music's great too, although the sound effects are muffled.

Being a beat-'em-up, its gameplay is extraordinarily shallow, although the problem is alleviated slightly by the tremendous variety when hacking your way through the levels. There are standard sideways-scrolling levels, and riding-along-on-surfboard levels, even into-the-screen sections (in the style of *F-Zero*).

Okay, so it is repetitive – but it's got such a great 'feel' to it that I can't help but like it, particularly the way each character has individual moves. Er, cowabunga.

● Jonathan Davies

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
91%	80%	84%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
76%		84%

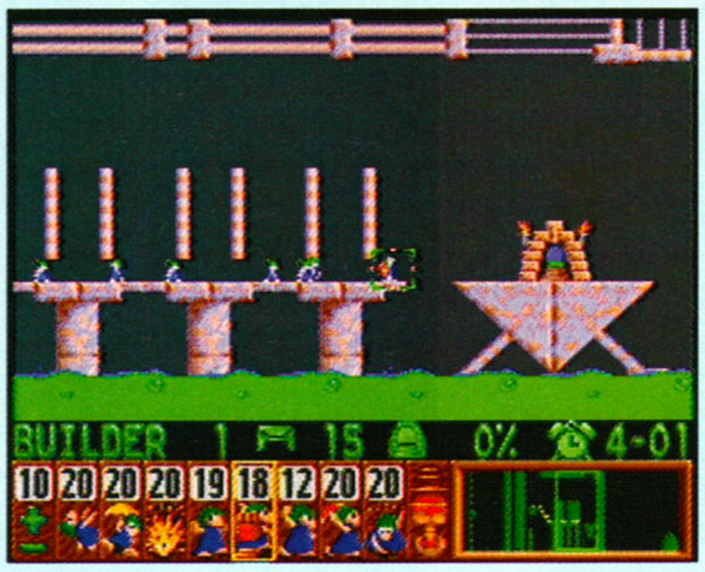
VERDICT: Turtle fans will really adore this. Others will regard it as a competant, smart-looking but thin beat-'em-up that might not last them very long. Actually both would be right.

LEMMINGS

UK Release

Game: Lemmings
Publisher: Capcom
Price: £49.99
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Building bridges is the only way to get all your lemmings through the door at the top of this level, and so escape a toasting in the sea of fire below.



Left and right: Catch the first lemming out of the door and choose which skill he needs to overcome whatever obstacle is placed in the way. Turn the next lemming into a barrier to stop the others relentlessly committing suicide, then blow up the barrier lemming so the rest can move on. (A wee bit unfair?)

GOOD, BAD OR UGLY?

If you've arrived at the Super Nintendo via a home computer such as the Amiga, you'll know exactly what to expect from *Lemmings*. And if not, erm... oh crumbs.

Look, it's like this: there are lots of levels, and on each one you've got a certain number of lemmings which need to be guided to the exit. Each screen is arranged as a puzzle, with obstacles between the lemmings and the exit. To get across the obstacles you need to single out individual lemmings and give them, sort of, 'special abilities' – for example, you can make some dig holes, and others build bridges.

A useless explanation, then, but a great game. It's one of the most successful games ever. The Super Nintendo version is much the same as others graphically (ie cute, neat, well animated but not outstanding) but bungs on an extra 30 or so levels, taking the total up to 130.

The aura surrounding the game seems to have faded a little since I first saw it a year or two ago – but it's still fab.

● Jonathan Davies

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
75%	81%	80%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
90%		86%

VERDICT: Like a little world of it's own inside a cartridge. (*Er...- Ed.*) A real investment.

RIVAL TURF

UK Release

Game: Rival Turf
Publisher: Jaleco
Price: £44.99
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

'Aaah... Aaah... Aw, come on, sneeze! I hate it when this happens!'

'Look here buster, it's my turn today. You sat by the window last time.'

'Eeeeh-hee-hee-hee! Stop it! Stop it!'

'It's the shields, cap'n, they canna take much more o'this!' Bang! 'Aaargh!'

GOOD, BAD OR UGLY?

There are two things you ought to know about *Rival Turf*: 1) it's not as good as *Final Fight*, which we looked at last month, although 2) it has the advantage of a two-player mode. But that's not enough to fill up this rather large box, is it? (*No, get writing– Ed.*) Um.

The graphics are pretty good. *Final Fight*'s are better, but *Rival Turf* has some well-drawn and nicely animated sprites. (I'm not too sure about the big chap in denim with the sailor's cap.) There's a nice section where you jump onto a bus and beat people up as you ride along, but *Final Fight*'s train bit just has the edge.

As for the gameplay, well, *Rival Turf* does start to get boring pretty quickly. The baddies are repetitive, and the range of moves is limited. The two-player mode is a help, but even that gradually gets more and more boring, and as Players 1 and 2 can beat each other up as well as the baddies, that's what generally tends to happen. (The 'vs' option is incredibly dull, by the way.)

So *Rival Turf* is okay, then, but not great. Still, if you desperately want a two-player version of *Final Fight*, this is the game to go for.

● Jonathan Davies

GRAPHICS	SOUND
76%	69%
GAMEPLAY	**GAMELIFE**
70%	65%

VERDICT: All rightish, and it will earn its fans, but not a game to rush out and buy.

OVERALL SCORE: 58%

SUPER GHOULS 'N' GHOSTS

UK Release

Game: Super Ghouls 'n' Ghosts
Publisher: Capcom
Price: £49.99
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Arthur's got himself a new suit of armour to prance around in, and special powers, too!

The end of level one, and this bird's about to cause you loads of problems. (Story of my life.)

Level two's set aboard this sinking ship – and an utterly gorgeous one at that.

Arthur's thermals get put to the test in this beautifully depicted snowy level.

GOOD, BAD OR UGLY?

I've always felt that *Super Ghouls 'n' Ghosts* is overrated. It's got some lovely graphics and sound, but there's loads of slow-down, affecting playability. The annoyingly unforgiving and really difficult gameplay is another problem – if you have oodles of patience you *might* be okay. But the biggest problem is the game's structure. The lack of a password or back-up means that you have to try and complete it in one sitting.

Indeed, Konami's *Castlevania IV*, a less widely acclaimed game, is much better than *Super G 'n' G*. The passwords given throughout *Castlevania* mean the player avoids having to play the same section again and again, allowing for a larger game with better gameplay, a wide variety of graphics, some outstanding music and very little frustration. Having said all that, though, *Super G 'n' G* is very well put together, it's just that it's rock hard and can be very frustrating to play.

● Jason Brookes

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
92%	88%	82%
GAMELIFE	**OVERALL SCORE:**	85%
79%		

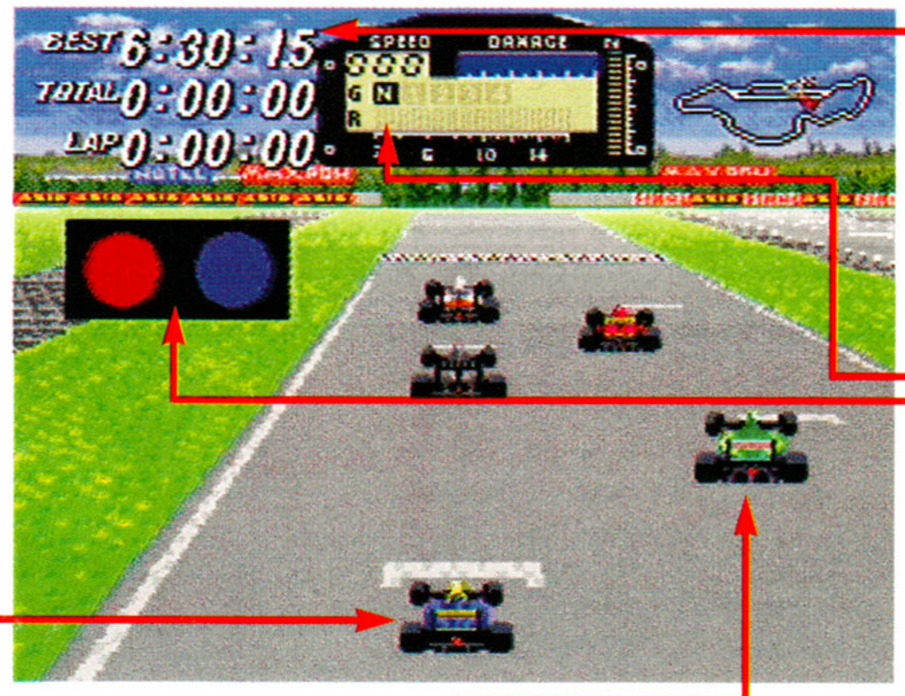
VERDICT: A top-class platform game only spoiled by a high difficulty level and awkward game structure.

EXHAUST HEAT

There aren't, as yet, any Super NES driving games available in UK shops. Apart from *F-Zero*, that is. And – soon – *Exhaust Heat*.

UK Release

Game: Exhaust Heat
Publisher: Ocean
Developer: Seta
Price: Approx. £45
Release: November
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit + BB



On this map you can chart your progress around the course, and watch all the other cars, too. (Though you'll probably crash while you're doing it.)

Loads of things like lap times for stats fans.

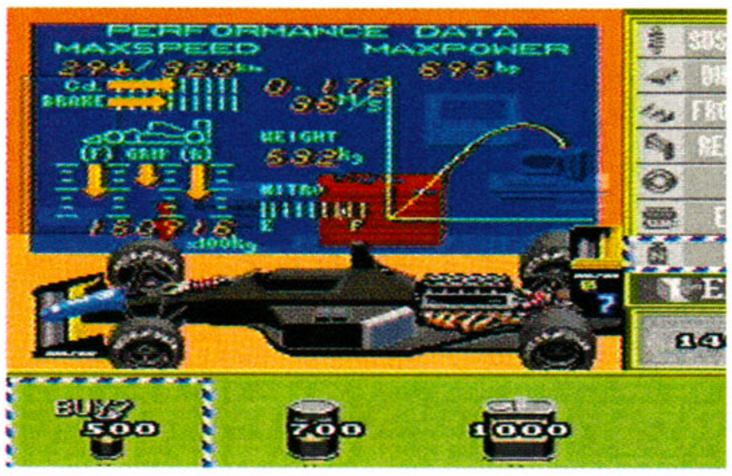
Your speed, revs, current gear and damage 'n' stuff.

Your car, poised for action.

Another car, looking a bit wonky for some reason.

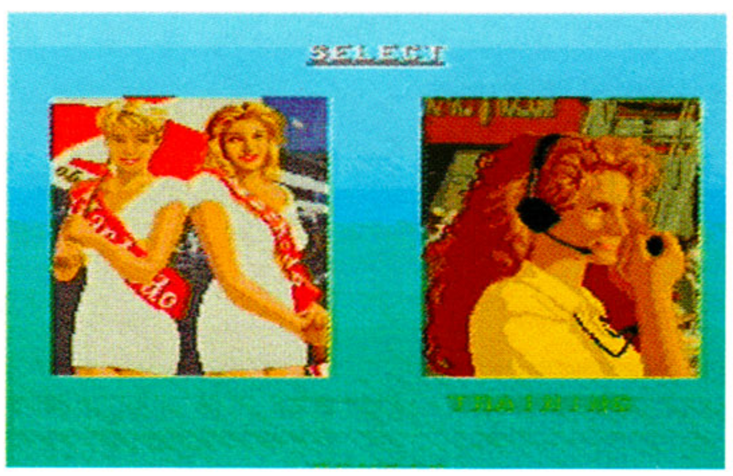
You've got to wait for this light to go blue (blue?) before you can race.

Here we are racing, although as this is early in the race, the cars haven't separated – later on you'll be lucky if you get two or three cars on screen at once.



Here's where you can kit your car out with some groovy accessories. That's if you've got any money, which you get by winning races. (Or, er, not.)

That legendary pits scene in full. What you don't see is the whole thing swinging round in glorious Mode 7-o-vision from a rear to a side view.



Babes! All the between-race screens in *Exhaust Heat* are well drawn with lots of animation. (Explaining what all those programmers concentrated on.)

GOOD, BAD OR UGLY?

The trouble with reviewing a new driving game these days is this: how could anything be as good as *Super Mario Kart*? And I'm not sure what the answer is (it's the same problem beat-'em-ups suffer in the wake of *Street Fighter II*) so the review is likely to end up sounding all down-beat when the game itself might not actually be too bad. And that, I fear, is what's about to happen to *Exhaust Heat*.

Exhaust Heat has been around for a while on import and has rightfully received mild critical acclaim. Good Super Nintendo racing games have tended to be pretty thin on the ground, as I forever seem to be pointing out, and *Exhaust Heat* plugged that gap pretty effectively. It's got a good racing atmosphere, and some of the best link sequences in the business. (Going into the pits is a particularly satisfying experience.) True, you do occasionally find yourself driving for ages and ages without another car in sight. But that doesn't happen too often, and the rest of the time you're dodging and weaving between cars in true Formula 1 style. And there's a nice spinning-off-the-track effect if you hit someone else too hard.

It's a shame, therefore, that *Exhaust Heat* looks so naff. The circuits are all dreadfully bland, and move in a strange, not-quite-right perspective that makes all the bends look shallower than they actually are. What's worse, the cars have been incredibly badly integrated with the track. They seem to get smaller as they come towards you, and then go all wonky when they go round corners. *Mario Kart* handles sprites so much better.

Some other flaws, while we're at it, include the lack of a two-player mode of any sort and and a horrible, droning engine noise that you have to put up with the whole time. Oh, and it's generally pretty easy to win races, too.

So where does that leave us? Well, *Exhaust Heat* isn't too bad. It's reasonably enjoyable to play, the Mode 7 does give a decent impression of speed, and it's definitely a game you'll come back to again and again. It's just that, next to the likes of *Mario Kart* and even *Top Gear*, it looks horribly, horribly average.

● Jonathan Davies

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
56%	60%	72%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
75%		69%

VERDICT: A reasonably sound driving game that plays quite a bit better than it looks. (And, let's face it, it does look a bit naff. Apart from the pits scene, which is great.) But – and it's a very big 'but' – it's nowhere near as good as *Super Mario Kart*.

GAMESMASTER

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'This is ED-209's big brother who guards the end of level 2. His armoured head is impervious, too.'
'First, shoot out his machine gun. This gives you a breathing space before he attacks you with evil little cluster bombs. Time to dodge and weave.'
'Then the swine starts using his 'total-death-and-maiming-laser'. It fries you instantly, so zip over his head and hang around behind him, safely out of range.'
'Fire at this. It will flash with every hit until he stops wandering back and forth and, in time-honoured fashion, explodes in a hail of shrapnel.'
FOR - SNES
FROM - KONAMI
AVAILABLE - DECEMBER
PRICE - £45
MEMORY - 8MBits
STOP
WIN AN AXELAY CART! HOW MANY TIMES DOES THE WORD AXELAY APPEAR IN THIS REVIEW?
OPTIONS - 3 SET-UPS
LEVELS - 6
DIFFICULTY - 5 SETTINGS
PLAYERS - 1
SAVE GAME - NO
END
AXELAY
GRAPHICS
Mode 7 at its best. Lots of big, er, things to see, but it does get slow and jerky. Some bits are eye-poppingly good!
SOUNDS
Decent music and a welcome cacophony of blasting, exploding and crashing noises. Nope, nothing wrong here.
PLAYABILITY
Not as good as you'd hope. The different weapons you can choose add a bit of variety, but not much.
LASTABILITY
Six levels! 'Easy' option? Pretty standard game-play throughout? It really isn't going to last all that long.
OVERALL
Axelay is a gorgeous game. Okay, so this gorgeousness slows it occasionally – you can just about live with that if the game-play is excellent, can't you? Ah, but the game-play doesn't quite keep up with the look of it.
If it's a trade-off between graphics and game-play, this one throws its lot firmly on the graphics side, leaving those of us who love a decent bit of game-play feeling slightly miffed. It's not crap, though. In fact it's a promising attempt.
JAMES
Pipes and chains hang in the skies, and avoiding them takes skill
Despite all the hype, what Axelay boils down to is a six-level shoot-em-up with some impressive Mode 7 graphics. You take control of a spacecraft fitted with three types of weaponry. Then you simply fly through the missions, destroying all around you.
The scrolling alternates between vertical and horizontal with each level, and once you've selected the weapon which you think is most appropriate, it's a complete blasting frenzy.
The graphics. Just look at them. Konami are really beginning to show what the SNES can do when it's asked nicely. Each level has a totally different style, and they all look gorgeous. Your bullets strike sparks off the steel walls on some of the sideways-scrolling levels and the design of the hundreds of enemies is truly excellent. The amount of detail really gives the whole game a quality feel.
There's a price to pay for having graphics which make your eyes boggle, though. Axelay has the tendency to slow down when you reach crowded bits, especially on the vertical levels.
This is a bit of a downer, and it isn't helped by the fact that the game is too easy. You might lose a life working out how each so-called 'tricky' bit is done, but once you know, you'll be able to get through it every time from then on. There are three difficulty levels, 'Easy' being completable in a few hours. A few more incredibly pretty levels would have made all the difference.
The sound effects and music just about keep up with such attractive graphics. The music isn't as offensive as some you're forced to listen to.
Axelay is a beautiful game, no doubt. But it's too easy, it slows down too noticeably and although there are two scrolling directions, it plays too similarly throughout.
JAMES LEACH
Swoop over the cliff-top and there's the big city...
I don't know. Axelay is one of the best-looking blasters on the SNES, and I think it's also got the game-play to go with it. Eight different weapons to choose from, with three on each ship is enough for anybody, and the two scrolling styles keep your interest.
I reckon it plays as well as it looks. It does get slow when there are exceptionally large and detailed things on the screen. I forgive Konami for this because they've been brave enough to include the big, detailed sections in all their glory.
So, it's not perfect, but it's a good attempt at a gorgeous shoot-em-up.
JIM DOUGLAS
AXELAY
Here you have to patiently strip the gun-turrets and lasers from the ship. It can't be totally destroyed, but rendering it harmless is good enough
Just when you think you've beaten this guy (above), he reincarnates...
...into this. High above the cowering city it hovers, sending out bolts of lightning death
Do brilliant graphics make a brilliant game? Of course not, but they do help a hell of a lot. Axelay isn't a brilliant game from a game-playing point of view, but those nice looks lift it way above many of the other recent SNES offerings.
Another criticism is that there are only the six levels, and in a game like this, I'd have appreciated more. But as it stands, the six that there are soon become very repetitive and will leave you yearning for more. I'd recommend this as one of the better shoot-em-ups on the console (far better than Super R-Type), but not the best.
ADRIAN PRICE
GAMES MASTER TIP
GREETINGS!
To kill the bosses in Axelay, it's always best to aim for their centres. A burst of fire here is far more effective than a random spraying.
80% JUDGEMENT
REVIEWS (SNES)
PAGE FIFTY-FOUR
PAGE FIFTY-FIVE

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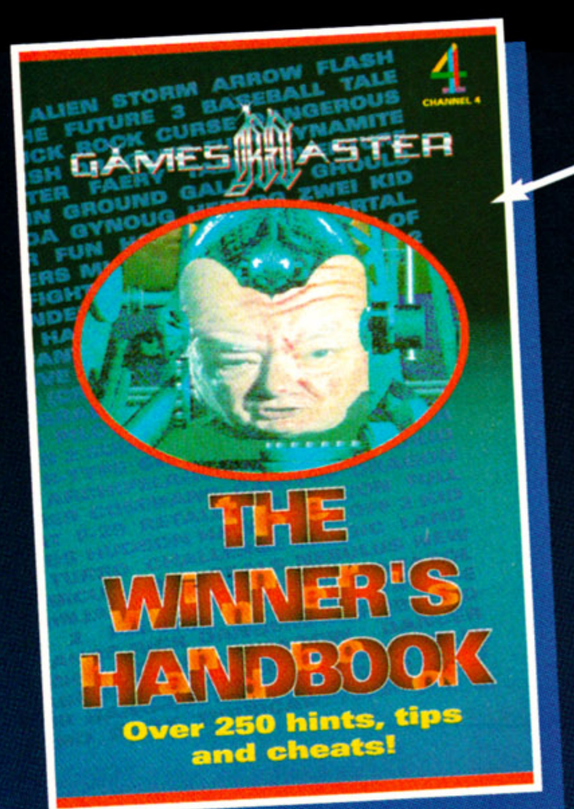

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SUPER PROBOTECTOR

UK Release

Game: Super Probotector Alien Rebels
Publisher: Konami
Price: £44.99
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Level one, and both players prepare for a bit of extermination and some general death-related malarkey.

Wow! It's something big, horrible and I think you'd better shoot it before it gets you. If you live long enough to see it into the ground, the overhead view screen opposite is your next stop.

Prepare to feel as sick as a dog when the screen starts spinning around madly in opposite directions. Why can't all games be this impressive? (And why do I keep dying?)

GOOD, BAD OR UGLY?

Remember how the Turtles were toned down from violent-sounding 'ninjas' to mere 'heroes' by British TV? Well, much the same thing's happened to Paul and Vince, stars of the incredibly popular *Contra/Contra Spirits* series in America and Japan. They've been changed into robots for the UK. *Super Probotector* is really top import game *Contra III* with new sprites – the reason it's been altered dates back a few years to when the original *Contra* coin-op was renamed *Gryzor* (the game wasn't changed at all) to get away from political overtones, then modified again to *Probotector* for the NES. *Super Probotector* continues the same trend.

Still, what's it matter when the game's this good? Konami are without a doubt one of the top developers of Nintendo software, and this is about as playable and gratuitously violent a shoot-'em-up as you could want. It's technically excellent, too. What separates the *Contra* series from most blasters is the variety in both gameplay and graphics – here, levels two and four use an impressive overhead viewpoint effectively utilising Mode 7, while the other levels are horizontal scrollers. Graphics are well done, although more colour could have been used on the side scrolling levels – they look a bit stippled in places. As usual, Konami have produced a blazing soundtrack that wouldn't be out of place in a war film. Indeed, the only real niggle is a lack of levels (also a problem with their more recent release *Axelay* – see page 36). Apart from that, it's a classic.

● Jason Brookes

GRAPHICS	SOUND
91%	93%
GAMEPLAY	**GAMELIFE**
92%	88%

VERDICT: An explosive shoot-em-'up that wouldn't be possible on any other system. Fab.

OVERALL SCORE: 90%

PAPERBOY 2

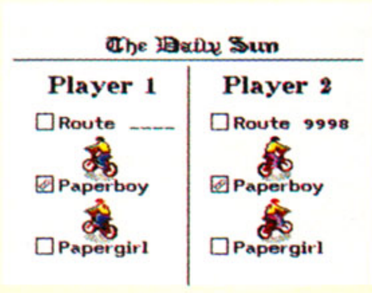
Watch out for cars. Deliver your papers (pick up more *en route*). Knock people over for extra points. And that's about it.

Has Paperboy fallen off his bicycle? Or has he simply nodded off in reaction to all the exitement? Who knows?

UK Release

Game: Paperboy 2
Publisher: Mindscape
Price: Approx. £45
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

Hard-hitting newspaper headlines appear now and again and add a bit of spice.



A reflection of the current climate is that you can choose to be a paper boy or a paper girl.

GOOD, BAD OR UGLY?

As anyone who's ever had to get up at six o'clock in the morning in the pouring rain, sling a 30lb satchel over their shoulder and plod through street after gloomy street getting newsprint all over their fingers for £2.50 a week will be able to tell you, paper rounds are no fun at all. Why should a paper round game be any different?

Well, it's not. Not if *Paperboy 2* is anything to go by. *Paperboy 2* is the most excruciatingly boring Super Nintendo game I think I've ever played. It's not as if it starts off being fun and then just tails off, either. It's suicidally dull from the word go, and I had to will myself to play it for long enough to satisfy my conscience.

Now, all this isn't Mindscape's fault. They've done a good job of converting it from the coin-op, giving it some tidy graphics and smooth diagonal scrolling. The problem is the idea – it's so utterly appalling that no-one could possibly turn it into a decent game.

Don't buy this.

● Jonathan Davies

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
70%	40%	15%
GAMELIFE	**OVERALL SCORE:**	
30%	29%	

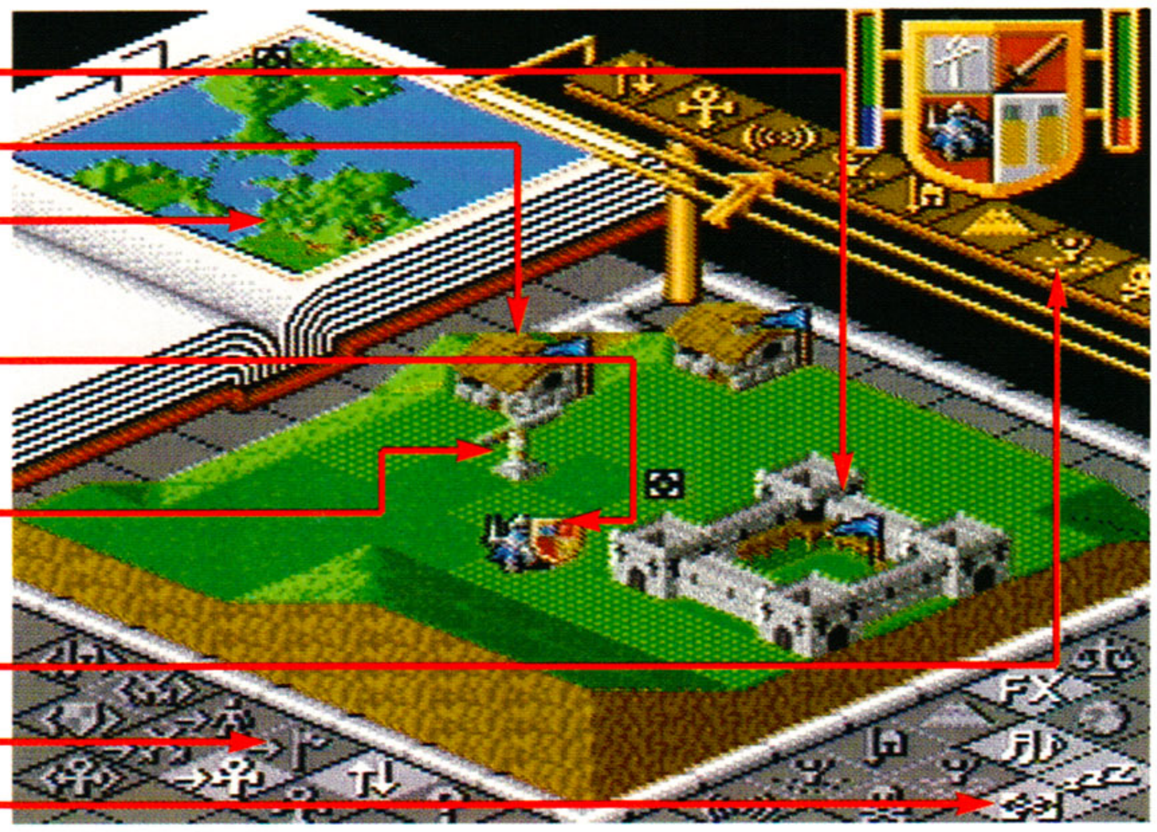
VERDICT: Painfully, teeth-grindingly tedious. You want to rinse your mouth out after playing it.

POPULOUS

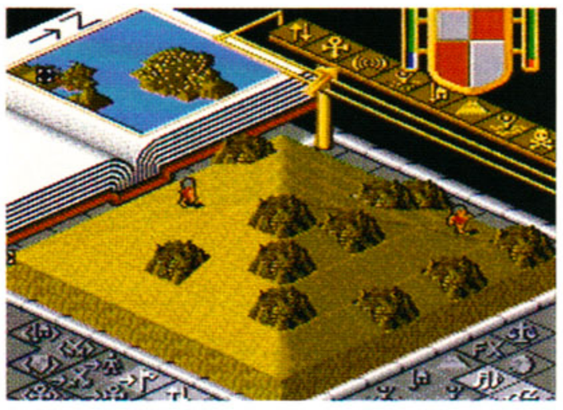
Fancy your chances as a bit of a deity? *Populous* is your game. You've got to make sure your followers have enough flat ground to build houses on, you've got to protect them from your evil counterpart's forces, and at the same time use sheer weight of numbers – plus the range of 'disasters' at your disposal – to wipe his people out. It's great fun.

UK Release

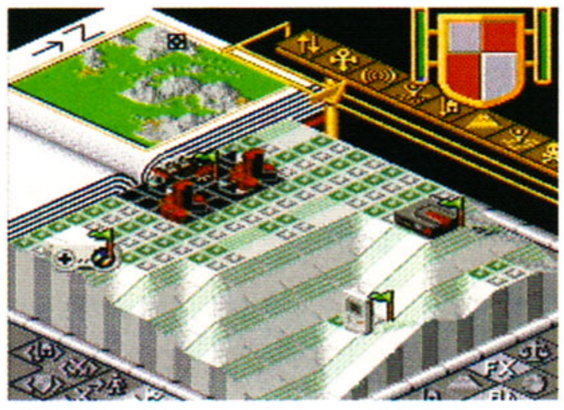
Game: Populous
Publisher: Imagineer
Developer: In-house.
Price: £44.99
Release: Out now
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit


A castle – what every self-respecting hut-dweller aspires to
A lesser abode
A map of the world. (Your 'evil' opponents, playing in red, are down at the bottom)
A knight. Dispatch one of these and he'll create total havoc amongst your enemy
Your Papal Magnet. (Don't ask)
Your mana-meter, showing which disasters you're currently capable of unleashing on the enemy
Some icons
Some more icons

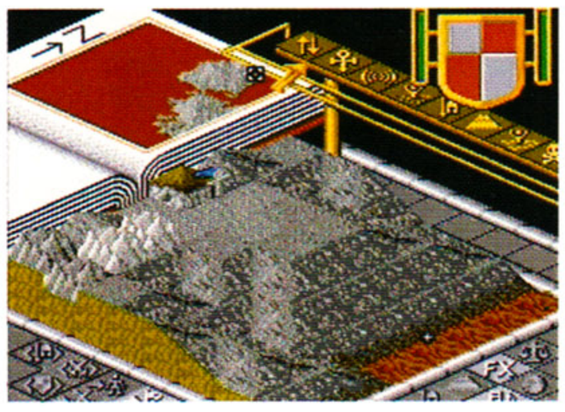
Think of this shield as a crystal ball. By gazing into it you can see how each side is doing (by looking at the blue and red bars either side of it) and what's going on action-wise in the current world. This particular shield has been filched straight out of the picture to the left, and in it we can see our knight heading into battle. The picture will change once he's engaged the enemy, and if he disappears altogether it's a case of good night good kn... (*Snip! - Ed*)



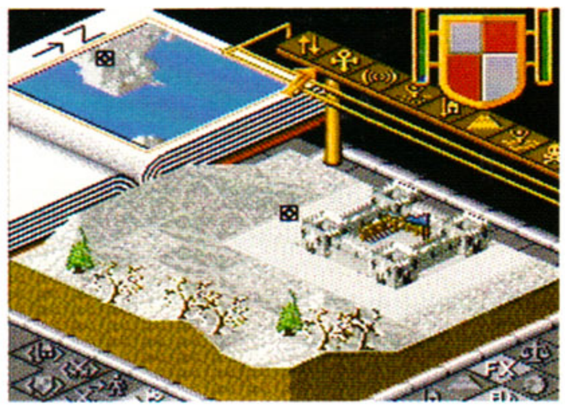
In the aftermath of a volcano, the baddies will have a real job building houses to replace the ones that have just been flattened by the violent eruption beneath them.



Here's a world not on other versions of *Populous* – the Bit Plains, where your people turn into green blobs and start building Game Boys and NES's all over the place. Watch out for batteries!



The populations of hot worlds like this one must eke out an existence from the rocks around them. Be careful your people don't fall into the lava sea and get fried!



In ice worlds, people will catch a chill and die if they can't find suitable places to build houses. (The varying weather patterns aren't just an excuse for pretty graphics, you see.)

GOOD, BAD OR UGLY?

POPULOUS

An entire world in one cartridge would be impressive enough, but a thousand of them? *Populous* is a big game, and no mistake. So even if all of the many levels were rubbish, it would still rank as one of the greatest feats of data compression ever. But, incredibly, *Populous* is big – *and* brilliant!

Nothing much actually happens for most of the time, but the process of raising and lowering chunks of land is strangely meditative. Your eyes glaze over and hours will fly by as you mould a habitable world for your followers. But when things do hot up, and blood starts to be spilt, the action is frantic.

Populous is also old. About three years old, in fact, if you trace it back to the original Amiga version. This Super Nintendo conversion changes virtually nothing, apart from the addition of the Bit Plains – it won't dazzle you with Mode 7 pyrotechnics, but it's just as enjoyable and addictive as the other versions.

An excellent game, then, but with one flaw – it's only really any fun when you're winning. That might sound weird, but it's true. On the early levels much enjoyment is to be derived from gently nurturing your population and watching them overwhelm the enemy. But slowly, inexorably, as you advance through the game, the computer player gets better and more frustrating to play against, until eventually you just let out a loud wail and give up. (I'm a bit embarrassed about that now.)

● Jonathan Davies

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
80%	78%	87%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	85%
85%		

VERDICT: This is an all-time computer classic. Relaxing, impossibly compulsive and nice to look at, too. But be prepared for things to get tough later on, and frustration to set in when you start losing.

ACTRAISER

UK Release

Game: Actraiser
Publisher: Enix
Developer: Quintet
Price: £49.99
Release: November
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit + BB

Actraiser was in one of the very first batches of Japanese games released for the Super Famicom way back in December 1990. It gained a cult following on import, but the UK version has taken its time getting here. Now that it _has_ been released, how does it fare two years on?

A GAME OF TWO HALVES

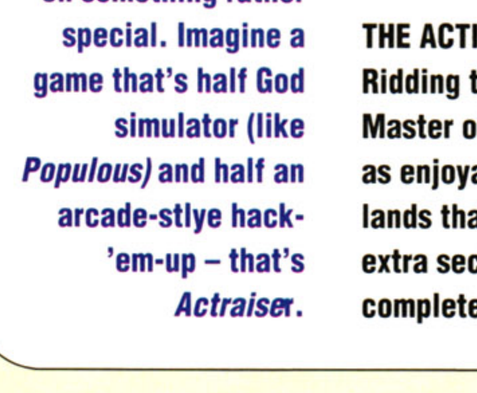
Actraiser isn't a normal run of the mill action game. No, it's far more complicated than that, with some sections that aren't action orientated at all. Indeed, the simulation side might well be enough to scare away the more gung-ho beat-'em-up fans, but try not to let one of them be you – you'll be missing out on something rather special. Imagine a game that's half God simulator (like _Populous_) and half an arcade-stlye hack-'em-up – that's _Actraiser_.

THE ACTION GAME
Ridding the land of all things nasty is your first task as Supreme Master of the game. This bit's all rather like _Rastan Saga_, and just as enjoyable. There are two action levels in each of the six basic lands that build up the game – making 12 in all – plus a handful of extra sections in the final land, which only appear when you've completed the rest of it.

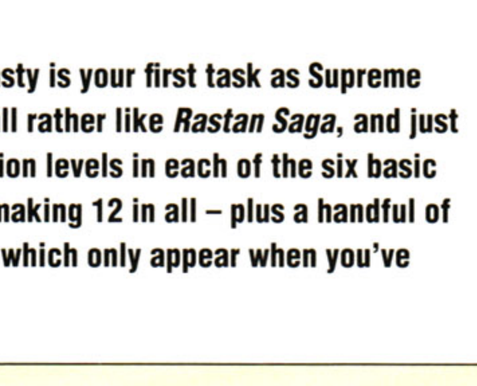
THE SIMULATION GAME
In these bits you act as God almighty, providing suitable habitats for your people to live in, and at the same time doing your best to rid the land of all things nasty. There're some pretty basic problems to solve, too. Dry up swampland with rays of the sun, wash away sand with rain and burn bushes with lightning – ecological chaos at the press of a button.

FILLMORE: THE BEGINNING OF A CIVILISATION

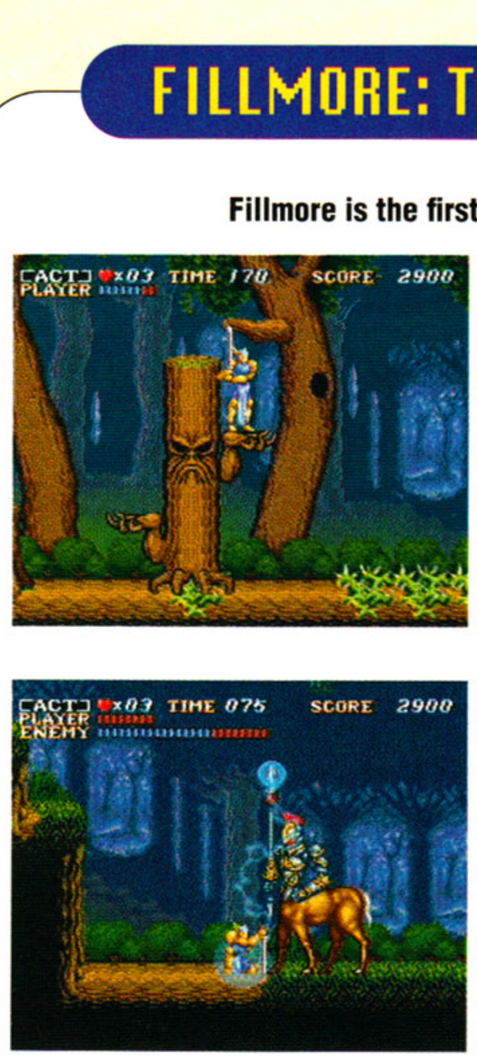
Fillmore is the first of the six lands you initially have to conquer. Here's how:



The first 'act' of the game is an action section, which sees you jumping around in a spooky forest, full of walking trees!



Right, now you're God. Fillmore is badly in need of people to cultivate the land, build houses and make babies.



Here's the first guardian to dispose of. He's not exactly a tough opponent, so you may find yourself playing God faster than you think.

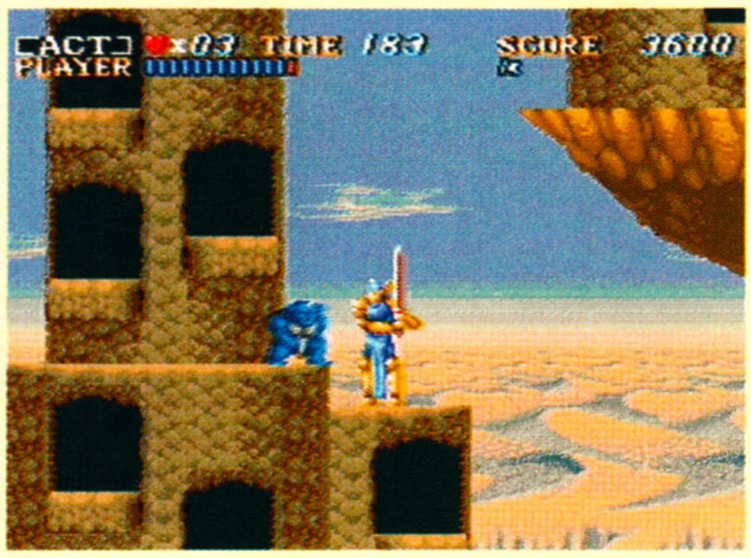
This is the very lovely Mode 7 zoom-in-and-outy bit which lets you check out all of the landscape at once.

THE HILLS ARE ALIVE...

...with the sound of music. And exceptional music, too. An often much underrated element in a game, the soundtrack is a major asset in _Actraiser_'s favour. Top Japanese musician Yuzo Koshiro is the talented young chap behind these tunes – indeed, he's the man who's pretty much put the SNES on the gaming map as far as sound is concerned. Never has a console sounded so much like an entire orchestra. _Actraiser_'s music isn't just technically outstanding, it's also very memorable – something of a rarity these days. Yuzo Koshiro is incredibly popular with gameplayers in Japan, and as well as having written music for Mega Drive games like _Super Shinobi_, _Streets of Rage_ , and _Super Adventure Island_ on the SNES (reviewed this issue – see page 84), he's got a range of CDs available in Japan, too. Now that CD technology is becoming popular Yuzo intends to use entire orchestras for his music.

The first act in the land of Aitos includes this graphically stunning trip through the air with the aid of some doves. (Yes, really.) If you make the journey safely, you'll eventually come to a huge waterfall (below).

This is the barren and desolate desert landscape of Kasandora – previously known as Dino City. (*You're sacked! – Ed*).



On the same level, these vertical towers must be scaled too. All this slashing and hacking is very reminiscent of the coin-op *Rastan Saga*.

PLAYING GOD: THE LAND OF BLOODPOOL

Besides the monsters that fly around, each of the lands has it's own problems, most of which are fairly easy to solve. In Bloodpool the local lake is a tad murky, and it's your job to clean it up. If the player follows the basic rule of thumb that eliminating the monster's lairs is best done by building in their direction and thus sealing them up underneath your houses, most problems are pretty easily sorted out.

Act 2 of Bloodpool occurs inside this castle – three of your men travel here in a little boat.

Under these bushes lies a monster's lair.

The temple is each land's focal point – your people worship you here.

You're in control of the weather – dry up these swamps with sunshine.

Entering the volcano holds all kinds of hazards for our hero, such as these horrible fire-breathing gargoyles.

The pyramid in Kasandora has a rather groovy boss to tackle. He's not tough, but should be given a wide berth.

GOOD, BAD OR UGLY?

ActRaiser™

Players familiar with the Japanese version of *Actraiser* will know how good this game is. The rest of you, however, will probably find the whole idea of it rather confusing – how can a game built up of two so very different parts work? Well, it does – though you'll have to play it yourself before you're convinced. What is clear, however, is that there's loads to it. Even in this toned down UK release form (based on the US version, not the Japanese one), where the difficulty level has been lowered, it'll take a while to complete. I can't imagine how anyone could feel cheated when buying this – there's a lot of game here.

Indeed, it's not so much the strengths of the individual sections as the way they're combined that makes *Actraiser*. While neither the simulation or the platform game are very special on their own – the platformer *could* stand alone, but it would be a fairly depth-free experience – they work together to produce a really well-rounded and entertaining whole.

This the-whole-is-greater-than-the-sum-of-the-two-halves quality is what wards off any temptation you might have to sneer at the *Populous/Sim City* lookalike sequences for their simplicity. True, their design is limited, and the problems they present are easily surmountable, but then these *are* strategy sequences aimed at slash-'em-up fans – they can't afford to be too complicated. In context they do their job perfectly, which is to add depth and variety to the action sections.

Make no mistake – the arcade sections are the really important part of the game. With their beautifully-drawn parallax backdrops, outstanding orchestral accompaniments, and bags of highly enjoyable hack-'em-up action, they're enough to support a shallow-but-fun *Rastan Saga*-style thing on their own. They're beautifully presented too.

All-in-all, *Actraiser* is a real favourite of mine. It's the unusual combination of two game styles that does it, but even if the beginner's God-sim bit doesn't appeal, the graphics and sound are executed with enough finesse to keep you happy on their own. Extremely addictive – but it would be even better if it was it was as challenging as the Japanese version.

● Jason Brookes

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
92%	95%	89%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	90%
85%		

VERDICT: An extrordinary blend of play styles that proves, against the odds, to be extremely addictive and hugely impressive. It's a pity the bosses aren't tougher, however, as in the Japanese version. Otherwise outstanding.

SUPER ADVENTURE ISLAND

That platform's moving, and if our 'hero' misses it he'll fall into the water and sink. (He hasn't brought his water wings, you see.)

Er... (*'Pause'? Who took this picture? Tch. Sometimes I wonder, I really do – Ed.*)

UK Release

Game: Super Adventure Island
Publisher: Hudsonsoft
Price: Approx. £45
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Here 'Mr Higgins' goes underground in search of his girlfriend. (He's supposed to be rescuing her, you see, but she'd probably rather stay where she is.) At this point he's being assaulted by lots of little hopping things, which need to be either jumped over or shot with his upgradable weapons system. Oh, and those bananas can be collected for extra energy.

GOOD, BAD OR UGLY?

The only real problem with *Super Adventure Island* is the horrible, horrible character you control. He's called 'Master Higgins' (ick), he looks like something off an Athena postcard (only 'cute' – sort of) and he's *horrible*. Other than that, the game's graphics are brilliant – really colourful and really varied. The sound's spot on, too, with some absolutely superb tunes.

But how does it play? Weeeell... it's actually quite good fun. There's not much happening on-screen at any one time, but the game really speeds along so you're never stuck for things to do. The trouble is, it's one of those games that supplies you with infinite continues, and *Super Play*'s panel of experts reckon you could polish off all of the 15 levels in around three hours if you really stuck at it. There are one or two really tricky bits, though, and, annoyingly, you die as soon as you hit a baddy.

A nice, cheerful, fun sort of a game, then, but don't expect it to last you for very long.

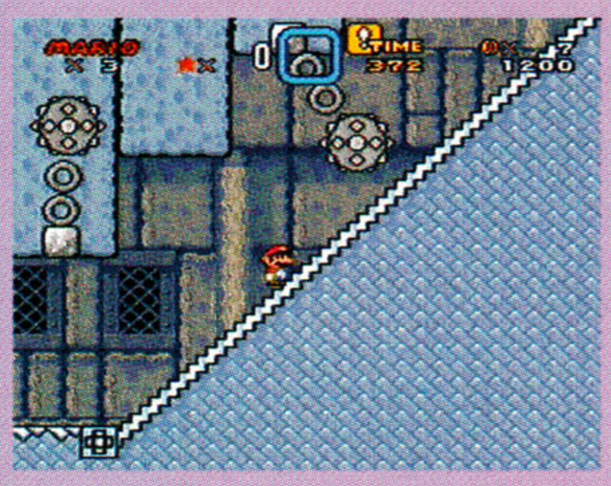
● Jonathan Davies

GRAPHICS	SOUND
86%	92%
GAMEPLAY	**GAMELIFE**
80%	69%

VERDICT: Brash, with a nauseating character, but brilliant fun and very nice to look at.

OVERALL SCORE: 75%

SUPER MARIO WORLD

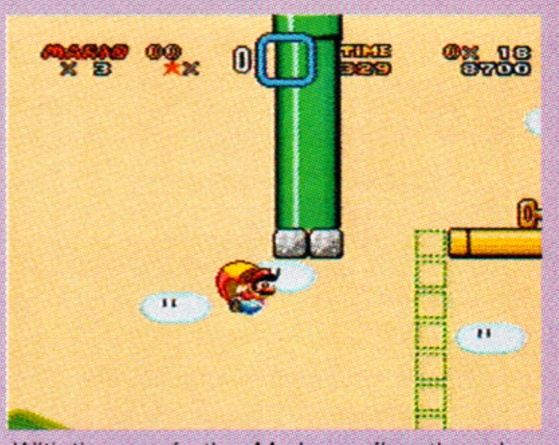


Swinging maces are just one of the many hazards in the castles. Avoid them, especially when Mario hasn't eaten a mushroom – he'll lose a life instantly on contact.

Mario has rescued Yoshi the dinosaur and is treating him to a snack here. You'll find that Yoshi likes to eat all colours of koopas, but they don't all have the same effect.

UK Release

Game: Super Mario World
Publisher: Nintendo
Price: £39.99
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit + BB



With the cape feather Mario can fly – the only way to reach some of the secret exits.

GOOD, BAD OR UGLY?

Being such a new mag, Mario fever hadn't taken off in the office until *Super Mario Kart* came along, rejuvenating our interest in NIntendo's first hero. So, we started tackling *Super Mario World*, the only 'real' Mario game on the SNES, just for fun. But now *Super Mario World* is available separately from the machine in the UK. (So we weren't wasting our time, after all. Phew!)

As with most Mario games, first impressions of *SMW* can be deceptively lukewarm. Next to *Sonic* it all looks rather basic, with few colours and a chunky, primitive style to the repetitive graphics. Look through the manual, however, and you'll begin to realise what a versatile game this is – only Nintendo seem to be able to match 'pick-up and play' accessibility with an incredible array of deeper mechanics that players discover as they go along. Although true Mario-lovers tend to prefer the third game on the NES, this is a real landmark in console game history. Buy it now!

● Jason Brookes

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
86%	84%	94%
GAMELIFE	**OVERALL SCORE:**	
93%	94%	

VERDICT: An amazingly deep and playable platform game, and a credit to Nintendo. Unmissable.

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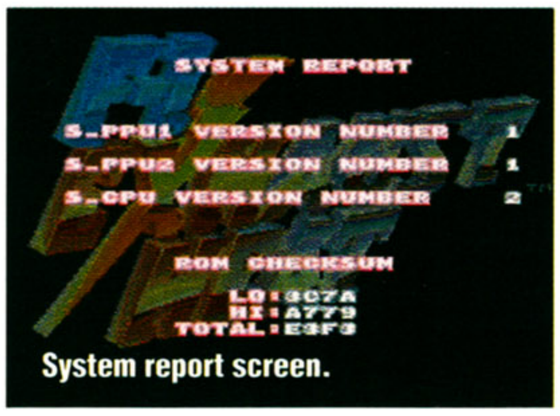
MODE 7

CALLING ALL CHEATS, CRACKERS, AND GAME FREAKS!

Just as Mode 7 (the Super Nintendo graphics feature) lets your machine present the most spectacular game graphics around, so Mode 7 (the *Super Play* tips section) allows you to get the most spectacular Super Nintendo scores around. And how? By allowing you to cheat on the games, of course!

This month we've got cheats for everything from *Exhaust Heat* to *Prince Of Persia*, plus your first letters to Ask Ade – *Super Play*'s special games help column. Adrian Price is here to give you a hand with all your gaming problems, so if you've got something you're particularly stuck on write to him at the address below. Indeed, we want *all* your Super Nintendo cheats'n'tips – the best ones we use each month will win a *Super Play* T-shirt, and all the others we use will receive a *Super Play* pen. Write to Mode 7, *Super Play*, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. We look forward to hearing from you.



System report screen.

Exhaust Heat
Ocean

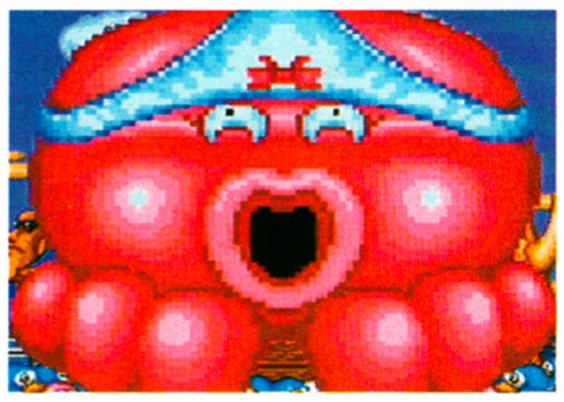
Er, we're not too sure about the thinking behind this particular cheat – what can the programmers have been on when they put it in? – but perhaps you'll find a use for it. (Just don't say we didn't warn you, that's all.) You see, typing in your name as 'CHECK' will bring up a weird screen full of technical info about your Super Nintendo. Great, eh?

Parodius
Konami

Parodius is an excellent (and funny) shoot-'em-up. We printed cheats for it last month, but these extra ones act as an addendum to them. They're kind of fun.

● On the Player Select Screen (the one where you choose between auto and manual power-up), hold down SELECT and press START three times. That'll allow you to switch Roulette Mode on and off. (Much more than that we can't tell you.)

● During the animated intro, with all the penguins watching television, press UP, and then, while holding UP and L, press X five times, B five times, Y five times, and A five times. Then, when the pink octopus flies out of the screen, you be able to move it around using the pad and zoom it in and out with A and B. This is, of course, useless – but very weird to watch!


Why's he got knickers on his head?

Parodius invincibility cheat explained
The cheat we printed last issue *was* correct, but failed to distinguish between R as 'pressing the right button on the top of the pad' and R as 'pressing the direction right on the direction controller bit'. Try it again, but this time R and L refer to the top thingies, and LEFT, RIGHT, etc refer to actual directions on the thumbpad bit: First, pause the game, then L, R, UP, RIGHT, A, LEFT, Y, DOWN, B, A, Y, A, Y, R and then unpause again.

Ranma option screen.

Ranma 1/2
NCS Masiya

Imagine a cross between *Street Fighter II* and a weird Japanese anime TV programme. That's *Ranma 1/2*, and it's great. To make it even greater, try these:

● In two-player mode, have you ever wished you could both select the same character, for a fair match? Well now you can! Normally if you both pick the same character and try to play the game, it won't let you. But if you hold down L and R while you do it then, er, it will! Great!

● On the title screen, as you select your game, hold down the L and R buttons and an extra menu appears on which you'll be able to choose the game's bonus round characters as well as the normal ones.

● On the option screen, move to 'Credit' and press the select button 10 times. You'll now have 50 credits!

ASK ADE

INVALUABLE MONTHLY GAMING ADVICE

Er. Hi everyone. Thanks for sending in all your problems. I've had a really good laugh sorting them out. Er. Not 'laugh' as in 'laugh', of course. There's nothing funny about getting stuck on a game. Hell, I've been there. There was this time when I was on level six of *Castlevania IV*. These spectres kept killing me. It was, like, terrible. I got through it in the end, though. (In case you were wondering.) It would have been a lot quicker if I'd had a help page to write to, you know? One of those ones where you write in, and get your problems solved. Like this one, in fact. Hur hur.

● 'Somebody's given me this cheat for *Street Fighter II*. It's supposed to let you fight using the four bosses as well as the usual characters. What you do, apparently, is pause the game and press LEFT, DOWN, UP, RIGHT, LEFT, DOWN, LEFT, UP, RIGHT, X, RIGHT, LEFT, X, X, X, X, A, RIGHT, B, UP, Y, DOWN, SELECT and then all six buttons at once. But I couldn't get it to work.'
Dean Morrison, Wakefield.

I couldn't get it to work, either. Quite honestly it sounds like you've been had, mate. In any case, it's unlikely that such a cheat would exist in the standard version of *Street Fighter II* – it sounds more like something they'd save for the *Championship Edition* (you could select the bosses in the coin-op, you see) if they ever do one. Sorry.

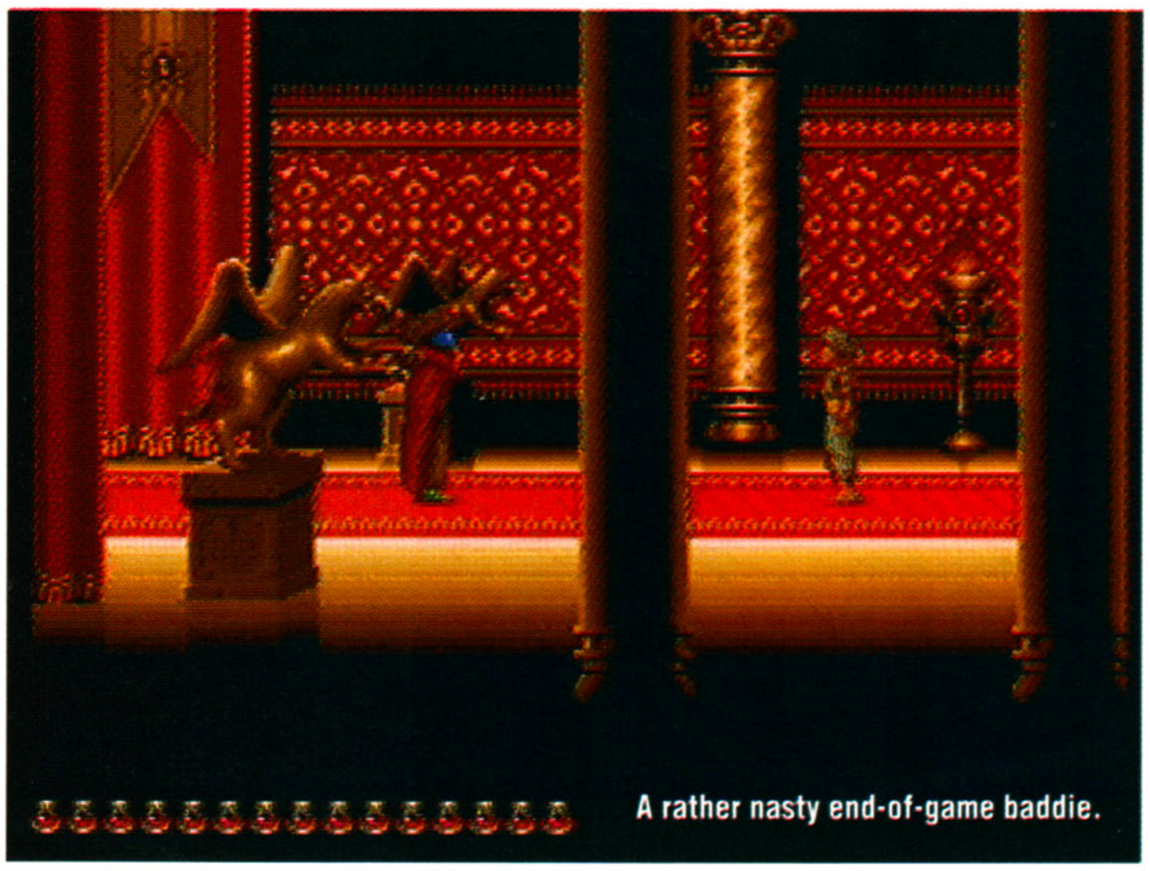
● 'I'm really struggling with *The Addams Family*. Have you got some codes, or maybe a cheat?'
L Green, Coventry.

Although lots of people seem to think this game's really difficult, I romped through it within a couple of days of buying it. One code that might give you a bit of a headstart is B&1&B, which will give you five hearts, and Granny and Pugsley already rescued. Don't forget, too, that on the 'Continue' screen you can walk left for some bonus hearts.

● 'I always get killed by the bloke with the swords in the boxing ring bit of *Final Fight*. Have you got any tips?'
Mark Booth, Telford.

He's pretty tricky, isn't he? You've really got to try and grab hold of his swords when he drops them, and then make the most of them. If you're still having trouble, try holding down the L and R buttons when you press START on the title screen.

Right, er, that's it then. (Phew.) If you want to send in any questions here's the address to write to: Ask Ade, *Super Play*, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.



A rather nasty end-of-game baddie.

Prince of Persia

NCS Masiya

Prince of Persia is an extraordinarily difficult game, there's no denying it. Not only is each level incredibly hard, but even if you do manage to get through one, the chances are you haven't left yourself enough time to do the rest. So it's a big 'thanks very much' to G. Hill of London for sending us these codes, which will let you play all 20 levels of the Japanese version.

Level 1: AWSEAA4
Level 2: 4KU6WSZ
Level 3: IUAKCZA
Level 4: RTQOW64
Level 5: AOTAKUL
Level 6: RMH5C5A
Level 7: ILNOYXP
Level 8: VDRICOP
Level 9: MQ5NQWN
Level 10: NCKH546
Level 11: ERCZWLJ
Level 12: ZJOX5CJ
Level 13: M5TVKJU
Level 14: VMBJKI6
Level 15: 3LDZWFN
Level 16: ZZV4QDZ
Level 17: E1GGXHG
Level 18: VUSS4W5
Level 19: UZ5SBJM
Level 20: NTUGRFI

Mr Hill will be receiving a coveted *Super Play* pen for his trouble, as (of course) will anyone else who gets stuff printed in Mode 7.

Krusty's Super Fun House

Acclaim

At the risk of hopelessly ruining the game for you, here are the codes:

Level 2: Bartman
Level 3: Smithers
Level 4: Snowball
Level 5: Jebediah

Now you can start the game at any level you choose!

Now for a bit of rat-catching.

Action Replay Codes

Here are – not to put too fine a point on it – some Action Replay codes. To use them you'll need an Action Replay cartridge. (Check out the *Super Play* Superstore on page 91 for details of a special offer, and page 105 for details of how you could win one). Then just follow the instructions supplied with the cart.

Game	Function	Code
Addams Family	Invincibility	7E00C302
Castlevania IV	Invincibility	7E13F410
	Unlimited lives	7E007C99
	Unlimited time	7E13F050
	Unlimited hearts	7E13F299
Krusty's Fun House	Unlimited lives	7E11A303
	Unlimited balls/pies	7E032C0A
	Invincibility	7E11A463
Legend of Mystical Ninja	Invincibility	7E1AB208
	Unlimited lives	7E1AB002
	Unlimited time	7E009699
	Unlimited magic	7E1AB433
Legend of Zelda	Invincibility	7EF36D50
	Unlimited magic energy	7EF36E80
	70 arrows	7EF37746
	50 bombs	7EF34332
Street Fighter II	Invincibility	7E0C2BB0
Super Adventure Island	Unlimited lives	7E030D03
	Keep 1st weapon found	FE0D7C04
Super Battletank	Unlimited bombs	7E049E32
	Invincibility	7E006700
	Unlimited fuel	7E05C4FE
	Unlimited bullets	7E04A25A
Super Ghouls 'n' Ghosts	Invincibility	7E044A01
UN Squadron	Infinite lives	7E00F403
	Full power	7E00D520
	Full fuel	7E100808
	Unlimited clusters	7E00DD03

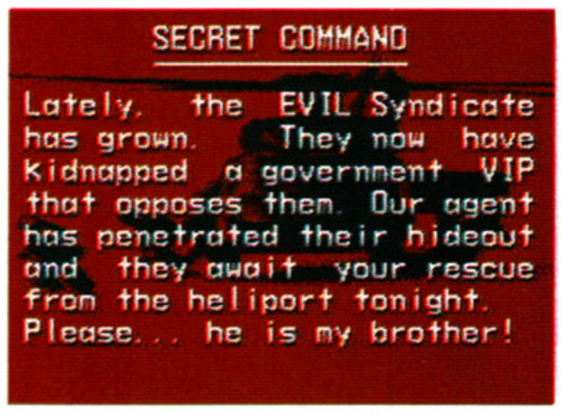
Thanks very much to the anonymous (well, illegible) reader who sent the above selection in. If you've worked out any good Action Replay codes, do let us know – not only will you be helping out your fellow man, you could (of course) win a fabulous *Super Play* pen!

Pilotwings

Nintendo

Headed for UK release this month, this is a brilliant game. Check out these codes...

Flight Area 2: 985206
Flight Area 3: 394391
Flight Area 4: 520771
Secret Command One: 108048
Flight Area 5: 400718
Flight Area 6: 773224
Flight Area 7: 165411
Flight Area 8: 760357
Secret Command Two: 882943


SECRET COMMAND
Lately, the EVIL Syndicate has grown. They now have kidnapped a government VIP that opposes them. Our agent has penetrated their hideout and they await your rescue from the heliport tonight. Please... he is my brother!

Briefing screen in *Pilotwings*.

To access the bonus games you'll have to attempt a landing on the moving target with the rocket belt or the parachute.

Hm! Love those funky blue boots.

Super Valis

Telenet

On the title screen, press UP, DOWN, LEFT and RIGHT four times, and then press SELECT twice, followed by Y, B and START. That should bring up a useful level select screen.

GAMEFREAK

SNES TECH & GAMING ANSWERS

by Jason Brookes

It's inevitable: the deeper we go into the world of the Super Nintendo, the more problems and questions will crop up. So that's what Gamefreak's for – to provide you with answers. Whether you want to know about the tech spec of the machine, or simply when a new game's coming out, Gamefreak is here to help you.

Dear Gamefreak,
1) On an imported US SNES, what changes are made to make it work on a British SCART TV?
2) If you use a PAL booster, will you get stereo sound?
3) Will anyone make a 50/60Hz switch for the UK SNES to allow owners of the machine to get the extra screen size and increased speed 60Hz affords?
4) Do imported games suffer from slow-down if you use a PAL booster?
5) My friend has a PAL Super Famicom, and it has a small black switch on the back. What does it do?
Yours sincerely,
Andrew Mooney, Gorse Hill, Swindon.

These are some of the most common questions we've been asked this month – mainly stemming from the big SNES feature we ran in the last issue. Luckily, we've got a few answers:
1) Console importers used to convert machines internally to SCART, but now the availability of cheap SCART leads that plug straight into the multi-out socket on the back of your SNES (they usually come supplied with the machine) mean no modifications are necessary.
2) Yes, but not through the RF cable – there is actually another multi-out socket on the back of your PAL booster which receives the standard stereo audio/video (A/V) cable, which can be attached to either your TV or an external amplifier. New PAL boosters are appearing all the time – they're generally reliable, but some readers have experienced problems with them on some TVs, so it might be a good idea to ring around the mail order companies who advertise in this issue to check if you can return it if your TV isn't suitable.
3) Having your UK SNES modified to run at 60Hz (which is what makes the difference with US/Jap machines) is almost impossible – the thing is configured to run at 50Hz and can't easily be changed. Trying will invalidate your warranty – we wouldn't bother.
4) No, they don't. A PAL booster converts the NTSC picture display to run through PAL at either 60Hz or 50Hz, depending on your TV – most modern TVs will manage it at 60Hz. The game will move as fast, and have a full-screen picture, though quality won't be quite as good as a picture got through SCART. Basically, then, the carts will run at whatever speed your machine/booster has.
5) Both American and Japanese machines have these, but British ones don't. On your normal imported SCART machine it's useless – it's simply the channel select switch for NTSC televisions. However, on an imported PAL Famicom, depending on where you bought it, the switch may change the screen display from 50Hz to 60Hz – in Hong Kong they convert Jap Super Famicom's and American SNES's to PAL, and often add this as an extra feature while they're at it.

Dear Gamefreak,
The first issue of your magazine seems to conclude that the best version of the Super NES is the US one. But:
a) Will it connect to our Phillips CM 8833/II monitor, or our Super VGA monitor?
b) If so, will it give a full-screen display and run at 60Hz? And will a SCART SNES work on all TVs?
c) Will we be able to run US and UK games (with adaptor), even though UK games run at 50Hz?
Yours,
Steve and Ann Gore, Putney, London.

a) No, because that monitor doesn't have a SCART socket – see the photo in Super Express for details.
b) No, but check with your importer that you can return the SNES if your TV is incompatible. A few are.
c) UK games will work fine, but some have been altered to compensate for the slower display – and will run even quicker than they should.

Dear Gamefreak,
a) Will a US or Japanese SNES work on a Commodore 1084 monitor?
b) How come you gave *Street Fighter II* such a strict mark? It's easily worth a good 97 or 98%.
Yours sincerely,
Brian McBride, York.

a) It should – some 1084s have a SCART socket, some don't. Check to see if it has a SCART socket to see if it'll work or not. (Again, see photo in news.)
b) It all depends on your standards – we only gave *Mario Kart* 93%, and it's easily the best driving game yet. If any game gets anything above 91 or so In *Super Play* it's a cast iron classic, make no mistake about it.

Dear *Super Play*,
a) I have heard rumours that adaptors for Jap/US games can blow the fuse on my SNES quickly. Is this true?
b) When is *Axelay* out officially, and at what cost?
c) What games should I buy out of *Contra 3*, *Sim City*, *Kick Off 2* and *Prince of Persia*?
Yours sincerely,
J Crossham, Oxon.

a) A recent spate of Nintendo scare-mongering has resulted in dozens of letters and phone calls about this. Rest assured – if you use a quality adaptor properly it won't damage your machine. Plugging the carts in back-to-front, however, is a guaranteed fuse-blower!
b) *Axelay* will be out in January, with any luck. Expect it to cost around £45.
c) *Contra 3* and *Prince of Persia* are two personal faves, but (though we haven't played a finished version of *Super Kick Off* yet) we suspect there isn't really a bad game amongst this bunch.

Dear *Super Play*,
a) Is there any way I can get rid of the black screen borders on my official UK SNES?
b) Is it true that Capcom are planning to release *Street Fighter II: Champion Edition* on the future CD ROM?
c) When the CD ROM is finally released, will the Japanese version be compatible with UK SNES?
d) Is there a second *WWF* game planned?
Yours,
Philip Davidson, County Down, N. Ireland.

a) No, you can't. See Andrew Mooney's letter above.
b) It's certainly possible, but a cart version will probably appear first.
c) No, because Jap machines are faster and the CDs will probably be encoded to only run on them. That doesn't stop importers trying to get round the problem though. We'll see what happens...
d) Yes, there is – expect it early next summer.

WRITE TO US!

If you've got a Super Nintendo question or problem you think Gamefreak might be able to help you with, send it off to us at Gamefreak, *Super Play*, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. We'll do our best to find an answer for you, and print it next issue.

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PLAY BACK

HYPER EXCITING READER'S VOICE

In *Super Play*'s first letters page: The CD ROM Drive – how much longer must we wait?; stop slagging off the Amiga; Super Nintendos are too expensive; video taping your games; *and*, how to blow up your SNES. It's all here...

'SPAZ-TASTIC'

It's refreshing to read a console mag that doesn't have caricatures of spotty adolescent reviewers called 'Spaz' and 'Flange Dude' telling us that a game is 'Yo!! Mega!! Spaz-tastic!!'. I was particularly impressed with the hardware guide and the anime feature. The whole mag is informative and well presented. I have, in fact, subscribed (slurp, fawn) – I couldn't resist the Akira offer! (How's the model letter coming along so far?)

About six months ago I bought a SNES. Rather naively, I decided to buy the official British model, partly in order to support the new market and partly because I reasoned that a machine specifically designed for the UK must be better than a grey import.

However, I found that not only do the foreign ones run faster (ie at the correct speed), but with a full-screen display and clearer graphics. The UK unit comes with a SCART plug, but this seems to make little difference apart from allowing stereo sound.

Nintendo wants us to buy only official UK products. Why, then, are machines and carts up to (and over) double the Jap/US price? Why are games released in the UK ages after their Jap/US debut? Why were only four official UK carts available until recently? Why is the British machine 'inferior'?

Yours faithfully,
Clive Beale, Merseyside.

Crumbs – you sound ready to boil over! It's true that UK SNES owners have had a pretty raw deal so far. But bear in mind that the UK machine's shortcomings are largely the fault of our TV system. It would be great if Nintendo produced a 60Hz, full-screen, SCART SNES for the UK market, but the chances seem pretty slim. As for pricing, well, like you say, we have it tough here in Britain. (Sniff.)

'SIMPLE ENOUGH FOR ELDORADO FANS'

I take my hat off to you. *Super Play* represents the model Super Nintendo magazine. The in-depth analysis of the SNES's technical specifications and Nintendo's marketing prowess has never been done in such detail by others, although the official machine has been out for half a year. Having lived in Hong Kong for four years, I thought I knew a lot!

The main thing I wanted to write to you about (to the point, right?) is the simple process of video taping your games. I'll bypass the technical mumbo-jumbo and make this simple enough for *Eldorado* fans to understand. (*Hey! - Ed.*)

Insteading of connecting the aerial to the back of your VCR as usual, substitute in its place the lead that normally connects your console to the telly. Leave the lead that runs between the VCR and the telly alone. Tune a channel on the video into the SNES, and start recording.The picture may be in black and white and all fuzzy, but don't worry – it'll be fine when you play it back. This is especially useful for *Mario Paint*, where you might want to save more than one picture.

I say all this, incidentally, because I read in another magazine that video taping games is impossible.

Your sincerely,
Ho Kim Ying, London.

'MY WONDERFUL GREY BEASTIE'

So the first paragraph has to flatter, huh? Well then, I think your magazine is *the* definitive SNES mag and without it I would never have known there were soooo many games for my wonderful grey beastie. Thank you!

Now that's over with, I'd like to ask a really important question. In a rival 'Nintendo' magazine it warned that you should not use universal adaptors on the SNES, as the extra strain on the console's resistors can actually blow them up. (Or something like that.) And, it said that Nintendo's engineers can tell if you've been using these unofficial adaptors by the way the console is damaged, so your guarantee will be invalidated. Is this really true?

Thanks for reading this letter – you must have the patience of a saint.
Regards,
Charles Thornhill, Stockport.

Hmm. Sounds like someone's been telling you porkies. In normal use there's no way an adaptor could possibly 'blow up' your machine. Trust us on this one. The only way you might conceivably run into trouble would be if you were accidentally to connect a cartridge to the adaptor the wrong way round. That probably would damage your machine (though a violent explosion seems unlikely), and most probably invalidate your guarantee.

'JASON'S INTERPRETATIONS OF JAPANESE TEXT'

Everyone must admit that there are too many computer and console mags around these days, especially with the increasing number of American mags appearing on our shop shelves. To see a new mag nowadays just isn't as exciting as it used to be; that was, until I came across *Super Play*. Being a fan of anime, I enjoyed Helen McCarthy's article, and I particularly like Wil Overton's artwork.

However, what's missing from every single console mag since the departure of *Raze* is that all-important Japanese correspondent. It would mean us readers no longer have to compromise with Jason's interpretations of the Japanese text. You could do reports on major Japanese software houses, expand the anime section, give advice on Japanese-texted games – the ideas are almost limitless. Surely it can't be *that* difficult to acquire one?

Yours sincerely,
Chun Wah Kong, Warrington.

What's wrong with Jason's translation of Japanese text? Seriously, a good Japanese correspondent would be smart. Watch this space...

'DISAPPOINTED TO HEAR MATT BIELBY'

I was disappointed to hear Matt Bielby had left *Amiga Power*, but I've now bought a Super Nintendo so that's okay. Now on to the main points of my letter:

1) I do realise you only cover Super Nintendo, but I don't really think you should attack the Amiga. I own both machines, and I regard the Amiga as superior – how about *Lotus*, *F1GP*, *Zool*, *Sensible Soccer*, *Speedball 2*, *Rainbow Islands*... All classics which I doubt will appear on the Super Nintendo.

2) Although the SNES market is different to that of the Amiga, I'd appreciate it if *Super Play*'s style was like that of *Amiga Power*.

3) Include more than one page of letters.

4) Include the differences between Japanese/US and UK versions of games, eg if a tad faster or with multi-layer parallax, etc.

Yours sincerely,
Nathan White, Walsall.

1) We wouldn't dream of attacking the Amiga. That would be like laying into the Queen Mother. As for your list of 'superior' games, well, *Top Gear* is just as good as *Lotus Turbo Challenge*; *Sensible Soccer* should be heading our way very shortly; and, er... the rest? Er... Ptui! We can manage fine without them, thank you very much. (But seriously, folks: both systems have some great games. We know that.)

2) We like *Amiga Power* too, but we won't be copying it. Well, except the really good bits maybe. Their letters page has some nice ideas...

3) Okay.

4) UK carts are usually identical to US ones (the already much-dealt with speed differences aside) although we will, of course, point out any changes we come across.

'READY TO GO'

Congratulations on your first issue. I've only seen one other magazine dedicated to the Super Nintendo, and that's very small and has inaccurate reviews.

Why are Nintendo taking so long over their CD ROM drive for the Super Nintendo? Sega have their Mega Drive one ready to go in the UK, but Nintendo

haven't even released theirs in Japan yet. And when they do finally bring it out, it will still take a year or so before it appears over here.

Also, why are Nintendo so against video game rentals? Sega are doing very well out of their rental service.
Yours faithfully,
Mohamed Nurmohamed, Pinner.

Sega's CD drive may be on the brink of being launched here, but the quality of the software available for it so far isn't great, and sales aren't going too well in Japan. Rumour has it that, for fear of the same thing happening to them, Nintendo are holding back a CD launch till there are some top-notch games available. Given the sophistication of the system, that could take a while, maybe till later next year. (See Super Express this issue for details). Once it does, however, a UK launch should follow shortly.

On the surface, rentals sound like a sensible idea to us. If they work with videos, why not games too?

'I HAVE A PROBLEM'

I would like to congratulate you on being the first Super NES magazine worthy of purchase, with clear reviews and, most importantly, a section at the back for easy reference. Brilliant!

However, I have a problem which I hope you can help me with. I first started playing console games around a year ago, when I bought a Mega Drive, but I found that buying new games all the time was too expensive. So I advertised in newspapers and magazines that I would swap games, with a small fee to cover the ads and postage, etc. This solved my problems and after a while I started on Super Nintendo games as well.

What I would like to know is: am I doing anything illegal? I wouldn't like to receive a call from Nintendo or Sega with a hefty fine.
Yours sincerely,
Michael Herron, Co. Antrim.

On the face of it, swapping video games seems like a perfectly reasonable idea. Nintendo, however, have worked out that, in legal terms, swapping games is tantamount to renting them – which they're not keen on at all. They've yet to take anyone to court for renting or swapping, but that doesn't mean they won't in future. Don't worry, though! Even if Nintendo did take a dislike to your activities they'd be unlikely to whisk you straight to court. You'd most probably get some sort of warning letter first. I hope that clarifies things a bit. If there are any developments, you'll read about them first in *Super Play*.

And that's all we've got room for, folks!

Next month, more pages for more letters – if you send us some good ones, that is. Write to us at Play Back, *Super Play*, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.

'3,000 CALLS'

SUPER PLAY READER CALL DAY AN UNQUALIFIED SUCCESS!

***Super Play*'s first Reader Call Day was declared 'an unqualified success' by the magazine's editor, Matt Bielby. The phones just didn't stop ringing on 1 October, the day Issue 1 went on sale. 'It seemed like we had about 3,000 calls,' said Bielby. 'Although, thinking about it, there probably weren't anything like that many.'**

● **Michael Pittordis,** 14, of London, thought Issue 1 was just wonderful. He agreed with all our reviews and loved their layout. He also liked the way *Super Play* 'isn't too childish'.

● **Marc Sunshine,** of Boreham Wood, Herts, was quite overwhelmed by the whole thing. 'There are too many reviews,' he complained. 'My brain hurts.' Otherwise, he liked it.

● **Jim Parsons,** of Plumstead, called to tell us that he doesn't like *Street Fighter II*.. '*Final Fight* is much better,' he said.

● **Ian Hicks,** of London, enjoyed the big SNES feature. After reading about the differences between UK and US machines, he phoned Bandai and, interestingly, their engineer told him that they may well launch a SCART machine in this country if there's enough demand. (So, come on everybody, demand!)

● **Andy McKay,** of Manchester, also liked the feature. *'Super Play* 'really kicks ass', he told us. (Can we print that?)

● **Ian Sturin,** of Kent, is a *Total!* reader, but he'll be buying *Super Play* too from now on. He'd like our hints and tips to be a bit more 'lumped together', though.

● **Keith Pentland,** of KT Consoles near John O'Groats, says that we're his favourite Super Nintendo magazine. He'd like to see a few more competitions, though. (We'll see what we can do.)

● **Ian Jackson,** of Manchester, also likes us best. He was a little confused by reports (elsewhere) that US/Japanese adaptors might 'blow up' his machine. We were happy to set his mind at rest.

● **Mick Gilbert,** of Burton-on-Trent, reckons we ought to stick in more previews. Now, previews of Super Nintendo games are tricky to arrange, but you can be assured we'll be doing our utmost to keep you in the picture.

● **Jay Reed,** of London, was another fellow who liked the big SNES feature, especially the bit that explained the difference between Super Nintendos and Super Famicoms. Oh, and he loved the magazine.

● **Barry Gilbert,** of London (again), thought the cover was smashing. He also values our coverage of imported games as well as UK releases.

● **Simon Leung,** of London, liked how *Super Play*'s got 'a little bit of everything', although he was miffed that all our reviewers are English. (Jonathan's a quarter Welsh, if that helps.) He disagreed with our *Cameltry* review, too – he'd give it 80%.

● Chris Taylor, of London, thinks *Super Play* is great. He'd like to see a bit more news, though. No problem.

If you're wondering why so many of our callers seem to live in London, the answer is simple. Due to early, and unforseen, distribution problems, *Super Play* still hadn't reached lots of places by 10.30 pm on 1 October – the time we stopped taking calls and went home. So a big 'sorry' to anyone who would have liked to have rung us, but got their copy a day too late to do so. However, we're running the readers call evening again (if you've bought this issue on Wednesday 11 November call us on (0225) 442244 now. and if you bought it before that you'll just have to wait!) and with a bit of luck the same problems won't happen again.

FREE ADS!
Sell stuff, swap stuff, buy stuff, advertise stuff, find new friends. And best of all it's, er... FREE

SUPERMARKET

***Super Play*'s free advert section explodes into life with... well, er, not terribly many ads. But it's a start, eh? By next month, of course, we expect to have disappeared under a deluge of adverts. Remember: This is where you can reach out to tens of thousands of Super Nintendo owners. This is where you can sell, swap or buy games; publicise up-coming events; sell your fanzine; look for pen pals; or perhaps even find true love... And best of all – it's completely free! Just fill out the form below, and send it now!**

HARDWARE FOR SALE

● UK Super NES for sale with seven great games, including *Street Fighter II*. Call me now with an offer on (0582) 662552.

GAMES FOR SALE

● Famicom/Mega Drive games for sale or exchange. Also money paid for your games. Interested? For a list phone (0232) 844473.

● I will sell you *Mario IV* for £30 ono. I would consider a swap too (esp. for *Zelda III*). Phone (0477) 34566 and ask for Ross.

WANTED

● SNES games wanted. Will pay £20 for those required. Phone (081) 871 9398.

PEN PALS

● Gamer-Link is the new pen-pal club for all Super Nintendo owners. For further details send an sae to Gamer-Link, 28 Churchfield, Ware, Herts SG12 OEP.

BOOK YOUR FREE AD HERE!

It's simple. Just fill in this form or a photocopy (in block caps please, and don't forget to add your phone number), stick it to the back of a postcard or envelope and send it to Supermarket, *Super Play*, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. If you're under 18, please ask your parent or guardian to sign the coupon. *This service is only available to private advertisers.*

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(SUPER PLAY 2)

Sorry, but *Super Play* can accept no responsibility for ads placed in this section.

WHAT CART? SUPER PLAY'S GAME LIBRARY

What Cart? is *Super Play*'s constantly updated guide to all the major Super Nintendo and Super Famicom games available in this country, be they official releases or on import. Here you'll find around 140 mini-reviews of every game you're ever likely to come across (and quite a few you won't), complete with alternative titles for those games known by different names in different territories, and a simple *Super Play* mark out of 10 to give you some idea of how good each one is.

Every month we update the list by including the games we gave large reviews to in the previous issue of *Super Play* - this month's newies include the likes of *Bart's Nightmare*, *Dinosaurs*, *Super Mario Kart* and (yes!) *Street Fighter II*! If anyone ever tells you that the problem with the Super NES is that there aren't enough games available for it, then this is the section to really prove them wrong...!

● Do you know of any game available in this country not covered in What Cart? Then send us the details of it, where you got it and a short review, and we'll include it in the next possible issue. You may earn yourself a name check and a *Super Play* goodie bag for your trouble! Write to What Cart?, *Super Play*, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.

KEY TO YOUR CHART

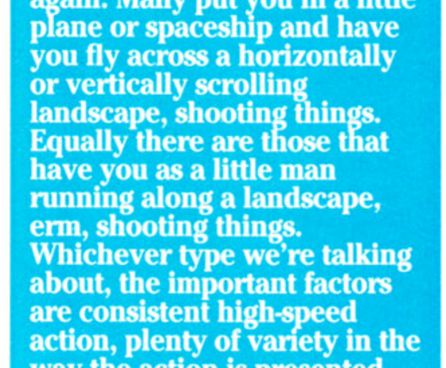
If there's one thing you can say about What Cart?, it's that it's incredibly easy to understand! Here's how it works. First we group the games according to genre (an explanation as to what each genre actually means, and what sort of criteria we're judging each game by, appears at the head of each category). Then we give you alternative names, publisher, memory size of the cart, whether there's a two-player option, what we think of it and, at the end, a simple mark out of 10. Games that make extensive use of Japanese text – and so prove impossible to play for non-Japanese speakers – we've rated as 'Impossible to judge', though you'll get some indication as to how good we think it *probably* is. In fact the only thing we haven't included is the price, as this varies so much – guess around £45 for most games, though our advice is to shop around.

SHOOT-'EM-UPS

Any game where the most important gameplay element is shooting lots of evil somethings over and over again. Many put you in a little plane or spaceship and have you fly across a horizontally or vertically scrolling landscape, shooting things. Equally there are those that have you as a little man running along a landscape, erm, shooting things. Whichever type we're talking about, the important factors are consistent high-speed action, plenty of variety in the way the action is presented, bags of clever power-ups and impressive use of the abilities of the machine.

BLAZEON (JAP)
Atlus, 8 Mbit
1 player
A very tacky horizontal scroller with anime-style robots. It's kinda different, but everything's so crude and jerky you're unlikely to be able to hack it for long. There are so many better shoot-'em-ups to choose from on the market.

4



CONTRA SPIRITS (JAP)
Alternative names: Contra 3 (US)/ Super Probotector (UK)
Konami, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
Re-titled *Super Probotector* for the UK (see review this issue), this is currently the best platform shoot-'em-up around. Superb use of Mode 7, and an amazing Konami sound-track put this in the super league. Brilliant two-player action makes it essential stuff.

9

DARIUS TWIN (JAP/US)
Taito, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
Lacking in levels for a *Darius* game – but this isn't all bad news. Good graphics, reasonable sound and not too much slow-down for an early title make it a reasonable buy, though it's not challenging enough in the early levels.

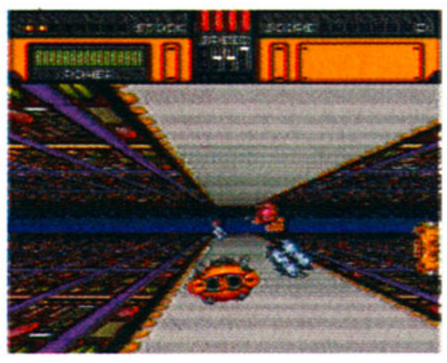
7

D FORCE (JAP/US)
Asmik, 8 Mbit
1 player
An absolutely appalling shoot-'em-up with maybe the worst graphics, sound and playability on the SNES. Subtle use of Mode 7 give the useless visuals a 'lovely' blocky appearance – not one to show off to your friends. Dreadful sound, too. Leave well alone!

2

GRADIUS III (JAP/US)
Konami, 4 Mbit
1 player
Similar to the coin-op and – astonishingly – all packed onto a 4 meg cart, this is one to check out. It's an early title, so slow-down is a serious problem – it rather scuppers the otherwise beautiful graphics and powerful sound. Still, it's more impressive and playable than *Super R-Type*, and not to be ignored.

7



HYPERZONE (JAP/US)
HAL, 8 Mbit
1 player
A very poor 3D space shoot-'em-up using Mode 7, but having absolutely nothing else to recommend it. Tedium City is your only destination when you've started this one up.

3

PARODIUS (JAP)
Konami, 8 Mbit
1 player
An absolutely brilliant conversion of the coin-op, and one that easily ranks as the best of Konami's recent string of classics for the SNES. Superbly colourful sprites, a hilarious sense of the bizarre, and some excellent musical compositions are just the icing on the cake. Hugely enjoyable.

9

PHALLANX (JAP)
Kemco, 8 Mbit
1 player
Horizontally scrolling shoot-'em-ups are two a penny on the Super Nintendo, and a new contender really has to do something different to stand out. This one has some decent graphics and challenging gameplay, but at the end of the day is pretty forgettable.

7

RAIDEN TRAD (JAP/US)
Toei, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
A great game on the PC Engine and Mega Drive, perhaps, but a tragically slow affair on the SNES, and not recommended. It should have been such a good game – sadly it seems that the programmers were too inexperienced on the machine to do the job properly.

4

STRIKE GUNNER (JAP/US)
Athena, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
This one is another average vertical blaster, with poor and unvaried backdrops, but reasonable sprites and some nice explosions. A dull game that only really gets interesting in two-player mode when both ships can link together for mega firepower – it's nice, but unfortunately not enough to recommend it.

6

SUPER ALESTE (JAP)
Alternative name: Space Megaforce (US)
Toho/Compile, 8 Mbit
1 player
This was the first evidence that the SNES could handle a manically busy *Gunhed*-style shooter with ease – and then some. Incredible sprite handling (coupled with Mode 7 in places) and absolutely no slow-down. But, it's more a technical achievement than particularly well designed, and it's a bit weapon-crazy – hence unchallenging for some. Having said that, it's an excellent buy anyway.

8

SUPER EDF (JAP/US)
Jaleco, 8 Mbit
1 player
A pretty, horizontally scrolling effort, but with some boring and unchallenging gameplay. Similar to the coin-op it's based on, *EDF* has some well drawn backdrops and sprites. But the music is bland and slow-down spoils the action.

6

SUPER R-TYPE (JAP/US/UK)
Irem, 8 Mbit
1 player
Beautifully designed baddies and some of the best graphics on the SNES make this one of the best-looking shooters around. Not perfect, however, thanks to jerky scrolling, terrible slow-down and an infuriating lack of restart points. It also lacks the best parts of the coin-op – *R-Type II*, surprisingly, not the original game – on which it is based.

7

SUPER SMASH TV (JAP/US/UK)
Acclaim, 4 Mbit
1 or 2 players
A very good translation of the brainlessly ultra-violent coin-op, this is great short-term fun – especially with two players. No slow-down, plenty of tough bits and bags of addictiveness, it's a game you'll keep coming back to. We definitely recommend this one.

8

SYLVALION (JAP)
Toshiba EMI, 8 Mbit
1 player
A peculiar maze-based scrolling shoot-'em-up where you guide a slithery dragon down baddy-infested passages. It looks a little tacky but is actually quite good. Not much of a challenge, though, and not a game you're likely to return to.

6

THUNDER SPIRITS (JAP/US)
Toshiba EMI, 8 Mbit
1 player
A conversion of the well-respected Mega Drive game *Thunderforce 3*, but it unfortunately isn't anywhere near as good on the SNES. Guess why? Yep, slow-down spoils the action! Everything else is very similar to the MD game – ie no effort has been made to use any of the special features that the SNES offers. Rather a missed opportunity.

6

UN SQUADRON (US/UK)
Alternative name: Area 88 (JAP)
Capcom, 8 Mbit
1 player
Brilliantly designed pseudo-conversion of the coin-op, and still one of the best games on the machine. Although it slows down in places, the action is still exciting. Sonically average, but graphically superb, and a *Super Play* favourite.

9

DRIVING GAMES

Now these really *are* obvious – they are, of course, all those games where your basic task in life is to drive a car around a track or down a road, without crashing and, hopefully, beating other, rival, cars. Some are overhead view, some place you immediately behind the car you control, and some put you in the driver's seat. A real sense of speed, good driving feel and easy to operate controls are essential.

AGURI SUZUKI F1 SUPER DRIVING (JAP)
LOZC, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
Fast, 3D Mode 7 courses *and* tunnels and bridges? We were surprised, anyway. This is extremely well presented, but suffers from the no-warning-of-corners problem that seems to

plague so many SNES driving games. If you can live with that, though, the split-screen two-player mode is a definite plus.

7

BATTLE GRAND PRIX (JAP)
Naxat, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
Remember *Super Sprint*, the coin-op? Well, imagine a version of it (ie an overhead view driving game) where you can only see a tiny area of the track around your car, and have to rely on signals to warn you of corners. We had a bit of trouble with this one, finally deciding that it's 'challenging'. Lots of babes, though.

6

BIG RUN (JAP)
Jaleco, 8 Mbit
1 player
After a promising front end, and a couple of good tunes, the abysmal graphics and virtually non-existent gameplay make for what is surely the worst driving game on the system. (Nothing like the original coin-op.)

2

F-ZERO (JAP/US/UK)
Nintendo, 4 Mbit + BB
1 player
The definitive Mode 7 racing game. Dead fast and dead smooth. And dead deadly, if you don't watch out for the vicious computer-controlled hover cars. Bland scenery and an unlikely futuristic setting, but it's both a decent game and an impressive show of just what the SNES can do.

8

F-1 EXHAUST HEAT (JAP)
Alternative name: F1 ROC (US)
Seta, 8 Mbit + BB
1 player
Your car looks a bit small. And you don't get much warning of corners coming up, so unless you keep one eye on the map, you'll keep crashing. But at least you get a proper 3D view of the track. You won't come across a faster, more playable, Formula 1 game on the system.

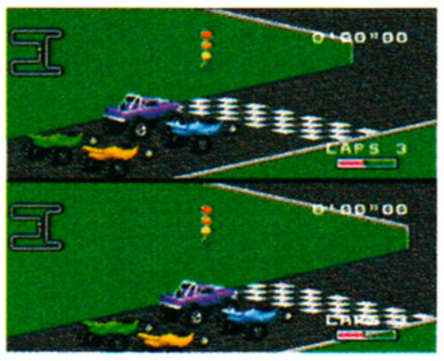
7

GPX CYBER FORMULA (JAP)
Alternative name: Cyberspin (US)
Takara, 8 Mbit
1 player
Another top-view scroller, and another case of yikes-was-that-a-corner? But this time, for a change, we've got anime characters racing in anime cars. And smoother scrolling than we believed possible. Other than that, this is an average game.

5

PAPER BOY 2 (US/UK)
Mindscape, 4 Mbit
1 player
(Is this really a driving game?) In this game you're a newspaper delivery boy (or girl) and the object is to cycle along, er, delivering newspapers. There are some obstacles to avoid, things to hit with papers for bonus points, and that's about it. It plays as naff as it looks, and really can't be recommended.

3



RPM RACING (JAP/US)
Interplay, 4 Mbit + BB
1 or 2 players
RPM stands, in this case, for Radical Psycho Machines, ie those ridiculous trucks with big tyres that so fascinate the Americans. The scrolling's rough, you need clairvoyant powers to anticipate corners, and it uses flickery interlace graphics to no obvious effect. Quite good fun all the same.

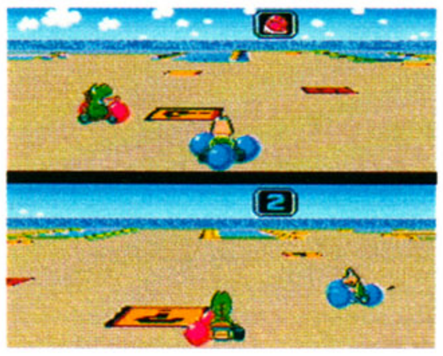
6

SUPER F1 CIRCUS (JAP)
Nichibutsu, 8 Mbit + BB
1 player
This looks ordinary, but is one of the few overhead-view driving games that really works. Fast, with a good 'driving feel' and plenty of options to cater for the long-term player.

8

SUPER F1 GRAND PRIX (JAP)
Video System Co, 8 Mbit + BB
1 player
Nothing to do with the popular Amiga *F1 Grand Prix*, this is along the same lines as *Battle Grand Prix*, without the split-screen two-player mode. That means you get to see more of the track on-screen, and hence slightly more warning of corners coming up, but not much. It's very much a matter of taste, and extremely difficult.

5



SUPER MARIO KART (JAP/US)
Nintendo, 4 Mbit + BB
1 or 2 players
It's... It's... words fail us. The best driving game ever, the best two-player game ever, and quite possibly the best, well, game ever. It's perfect. Buy it or we'll kill you.

9

SUPER OFF ROAD (JAP/US)
Trade West, 4 Mbit
1 or 2 players
Another variation on *Super Sprint*, but here we're allowed to see the whole track at once. We're racing monster trucks with a 3D(ish) perspective. The trucks look great bouncing round the course, and in the short-term it's good fun. Great rock soundtrack, too!

7

TOP GEAR (US/UK)
Alternative name: Top Racer (JAP)
Kemco, 4 Mbit
1 or 2 players
So fast it'll make your eyes go squiffy. The screen is split in the middle so two players can compete – just as well, as it's dull as a one-player game. The game was developed by Sheffield software house Gremlin, so fans of their *Lotus* games will be on familiar ground here. No smooth Mode7 graphics or elaborate trackside detail, just lots of traditional driving fun.

8

STRATEGY
The section for the thinking Super Nintendo owner – yes, there are a few of them out there! – where the SNES makes as much like a PC as it's possible. The games covered here are low on action but require masses of tactics and forward planning. A lot of them are really rather good too, although, having said that, lots aren't...

AIR MANAGER (JAP)
Koei, 8 Mbit + BB
4 player
Unfortunately unintelligible unless you're fluent in Japanese, this is a quite well presented business strategy thing along the lines of *Railroad Tycoon*. Nice Mode 7 intro.

Impossible to judge

EARTHLIGHT (JAP)
Hudsonsoft, 8 Mbit + BB
1 player
Hudsonsoft are normally an excellent company, so we'll give this the benefit of the doubt. It appears to be some sort of interplanetary space strategy affair, but there's enough Japanese in here to make it pretty tricky to work out. Another one to avoid.

Impossible to judge

GUNDAM F-91 (JAP)
Bandai, 8 Mbit + BB
1 player
A huge selling (in Japan at least) arcade/strategy game, with a fair bit of Japanese text. Still quite playable if you are willing to persevere, but this is essentially one for real robot fans only.

6

POPULOUS (JAP)
Imagineer, 4 Mbit + BB
1 player
The Japanese version of a classic British computer game, this puts you in the shoes of God almightly himself. A smashing game, though it can get frustrating (and pretty boring) eventually.

8

SIM CITY (JAP/US/UK)
Maxis/Nintendo, 4 Mbit + BB
1 player
Build the city of your dreams... and then bring it to its knees! The SNES version of this all-time great game is probably the best yet (even more user-friendly, see) although it hardly pushes the machine to its limits. This is extremely addictive, in the short-term.

8

SIM EARTH (JAP)
Imagineer, 6 Mbit + BB
1 player
A follow-on from *Sim City* that unfortunately tries to bite off more than it can chew. You're basically put in charge of the entire planet, which would be horrendous enough in itself, but when the whole game's in Japanese... er, no thanks.

Impossible to judge

ZAN II (JAP)
Wolf Team, 8 Mbit + BB
1 player
A pretty full-screen map view – and plenty of territory to conquer – this one may have, but working out what else it boasts proves more difficult. Another unintelligible-to-Brits war game, we're afraid.

Impossible to judge

SIMULATIONS
These are those games that try to 'realistically' reproduce the feeling that you're doing something in the real world, usually commanding some form of exotic transport. Here are games that cover planes, boats, tanks, spacecraft – if there were any. At present, it just seems to be planes and tanks, but we're assured there are others on the way. However, simulations on the Super Nintendo don't tend to mean quite the same thing as simulations on other machines. Flying a plane on, say, the Amiga, tends to involve lots of worrying about flaps, undercarriage, chaff dispensers, etc. The Super Nintendo takes care of all that stuff for you, leaving you to worry about the serious business of flying/driving/whatever. These games are primarily action-based – which is how we like them.

PILOTWINGS (JAP/US/UK)
Nintendo, 4 Mbit
1 player
SNES-owning aviation fans aren't exactly spoilt for choice at the moment, but this should be enough to, er, spin their propellors for now. It boasts a huge range of flying machines, and super-smooth 3D graphics, and there's even a decent game rattling around in there, too.

9

SUPER BATTLETANK (US)
Absolute Entertainment, 4 Mbit
1 player
The prehistoric *Battlezone* coin-op gets a new lease of life in this Gulf War tank game. It looks more lively than the wire-frame graphics of the original, and features some good explosions and exciting link sequences, but playing this will reveal that, frankly, it's boring.

5

BEAT-'EM-UPS
The phrase 'beat-'em-up', in our book, refers only to those games where you (erm) beat people up using your hands and feet, rather than weapons. (Although improvising with lengths of piping, sticks, etc is okay.) Some have you fighting one baddy at a time, head-to-head, but most have a series of scrolling levels, teeming with baddies, usually with a boss at the end of each – don't mistake these for arcade adventures, which sometimes feature a beat-'em-up element. A top-notch beat-'em-up needs loads of moves, well-designed and animated characters, attractive backdrops and, most importantly, loads of oofs, arghs and hie-yars. A two-player mode is also a help.

ASTRAL BOUT (JAP)
A-Wave, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
A wrestling/fighting game, and not a very good one at that. Graphically not a complete disaster, but the sprite collision and playability are very ropy. Fighters hobble around the screen like they've got stones in their shoes and, when you think you could buy *Street Fighter II*, what's the point?

4

BATTLEBLAZE (JAP)
Sammy Corp, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
An awkward game, that's not bad, but not as good as its contemporaries (in this case *Street Fighter II* and *Ranma 1/2*). The graphics are okay, the sound's okay, it plays okay and there's a reasonable range of moves and stuff, but, well, you could do much better.

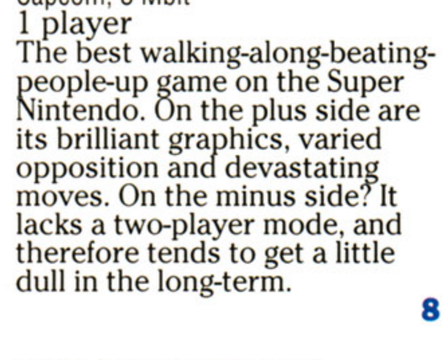
7

FINAL FIGHT (JAP/US/UK)
Capcom, 8 Mbit
1 player
The best walking-along-beating-people-up game on the Super Nintendo. On the plus side are its brilliant graphics, varied opposition and devastating moves. On the minus side? It lacks a two-player mode, and therefore tends to get a little dull in the long-term.

8

FINAL FIGHT GUY (JAP)
Capcom, 8 Mbit
1 player
A pointless new version with the best character, Cody, getting the chop, and Guy replacing him. A poor game-music CD is included. This is slightly easier than the original game, too.

8



GOLDEN FIGHTER (JAP)
Culture Brain, 12 Mbit
1 or 2 players
A very ropy *Street Fighter II* 'tribute'. The graphics are rubbish, the gameplay's rubbish, the sound's rubbish... This is one to avoid if you can possibly help it.

4

KING OF THE MONSTERS (JAP)
Takara, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
A fairly enjoyable Neo Geo game that seems to have been clumsily converted to the SNES. It's really too dull and unimpressive to get even fans of the original exited.

5

KUNIO KEN (JAP)
Technos, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
An odd mix of beat-'em-up and adventure game. We had lots of fun with it in the office, beating people about the head with pillows and suitcases, but we didn't have a clue what was going on, as it's all in Japanese. You might be able to suss it out, but it got a lukewarm reception even in Japan.

Impossible to judge

LAST FIGHTER TWIN (JAP)
Banpresto, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
Super Deformer robots in a side-on beat-'em-up. Quite nice graphically and sonically, but a rather limited game all the same. For SD fans only.

6

PITFIGHTER (US)
THQ, 4 Mbit
1 player
An utterly appalling conversion of a popular coin-op. Dire graphics and tear-jerking gameplay. The pits.

2

RANMA 1/2 (JAP)
NCS Masiya, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
A neat one-on-one beat-'em-up with some very odd anime characters (who change sex when they get wet, or into giant pandas – there's a Japanese TV series which explains it all!). Mismatching of characters can be a problem, but on the whole it's great to look at and play.

8

RIVAL TURF (JAP/US/UK)
Jaleco, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
Final Fight's main rival. Not quite as 'together' as its opponent – more repetitive baddies and rougher animation are the main qualms – but it has the enormous advantage of simultaneous two-player action, including a *Street Fighter II*-style head-to-head mode. Which one do you go for? Um, well there's always *Turtles*...

7

STREET FIGHTER II (JAP/US/UK)
Capcom, 16 Mbit
1 or 2 players
Dont't believe the hype – *Street Fighter II* is rubbish! Just kidding. This is the game that's selling SNES's by the bucket-load. It's 'streets' ahead of any other beat-'em-up, and a near-perfect conversion of the unbelievably popular coin-op. A must have, though very expensive on official release.

9

TURTLES IV: TURTLES IN TIME (JAP/US/UK)
Konami, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
The Turtles themselves might long since have handed over their cult status to whatever the current craze is, but that doesn't alter the fact that this is a very good beat-'em-up. Superb graphics, some remarkably clever characterisation, frantic gameplay, and a terrific assortment of different levels means plenty of fun. On the downside, it doesn't take long to become repetitive, and only slightly longer to finish.

8

ULTRAMAN (JAP/US/UK)
Bandai, 4 Mbit
1 player
At first it's laughable: a ridiculous-looking giant superhero beating up monsters that are every inch like people dressed up in rubber suits. But then you realise it's meant to be. This is based on those dreadful Japanese disaster movies you occasionally see on Channel 4. Worth a try.

6

SPORTS GAMES
While the idea of lots of fresh air and exercise may not tie in too comfortably with that of lying in front of a telly with a joypad, sports games nonetheless proliferate on the Super Nintendo. Just about every sport there is seems to be covered in one way or another, although because of the system's popularity in the US in particular there are more baseball, basketball and American football games than might otherwise be considered desirable...

AUGUSTA MASTERS 3D GOLF (JAP)
T&E Soft, 8 Mbit + BB
1 to 4 players
The first 3D golf game on the Super Famicom, and still rather good, despite Japanese text. Graphically, it's a mixture of bit-maps and polygons and it works quite well. The screen update could be faster, though.

8

BASEBALL SIM 1000 (US)
Alternative name: Ultra Baseball (JAP)
Culture Brain, 4 Mbit
1 or 2 players
Another middling baseball game. The pitching and batting are both quite good, but the fielders are a bit unco-operative and the graphics scrappy, with lots of superfluous Mode 7 whizzing in and out.

6

BILL LAIMBEER'S COMBAT BASKETBALL (US)
Hudsonsoft, 4 Mbit
1 or 2 players
Originally an Amiga game called *Future Basketball*, this plodding speedball clone is a surprisingly poor release from usually excellent Hudsonsoft.

3

CAPTAIN TSUBASU SOCCER 3 (JAP)
Tecmo, 8 Mbit + BB
1 or 2 players
Yikes! A Super Famicom football management game, based on a Japanese comic hero! There are some pretty dynamic match highlights, but unless you can read Japanese and have the patience of a elephant, stay away!

Impossible to judge

EXTRA INNINGS (JAP/US)
Alternative name: Ganba League Baseball (JAP)
Sony Imagesoft, 8 Mbit + BB
1 or 2 players
Baseball's tricky to translate well to a games machine, but this probably makes the best job of it, with its cute characters and slick action. But all it boils down to is throwing balls and hitting them. Still, if you really must have a baseball game, go for this one.

7

FIRE DODGEBALL (JAP)
Sunsoft, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
A cute, anime version of a very weird game (see *SD Dodgeball* for details). The graphics are pretty good, but the game itself is a bit too simple to be particularly rewarding. The lengthy intro sequences before each game don't help, either.

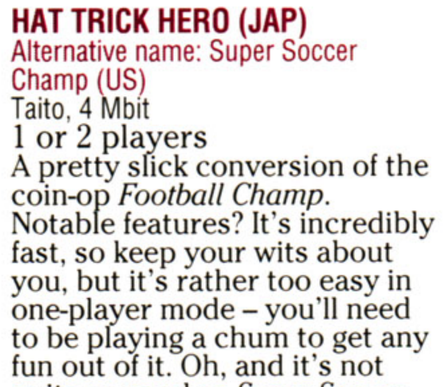
6

HAT TRICK HERO (JAP)
Alternative name: Super Soccer Champ (US)
Taito, 4 Mbit
1 or 2 players
A pretty slick conversion of the coin-op *Football Champ*. Notable features? It's incredibly fast, so keep your wits about you, but it's rather too easy in one-player mode – you'll need to be playing a chum to get any fun out of it. Oh, and it's not quite as good as *Super Soccer*.

7

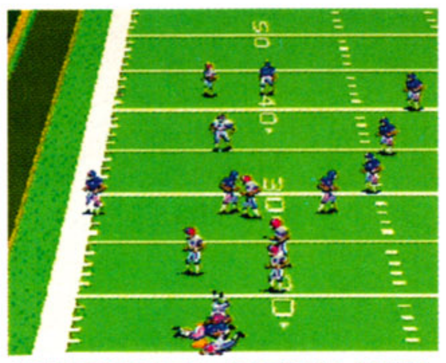
HOLE-IN-ONE GOLF (JAP/US)
HAL, 8 Mbit
1 to 4 players
An old game, but still one of the best golf sims available – it lacks technical ingenuity, but is very user-friendly. The overhead view used isn't much like playing the real game, but nice Mode 7 course intros help – as does turning the music off!

7



JACK NICKLAUS GOLF (US)
Tradewest, 4 Mbit
4 players
Fans of golf games that present things from just behind the player will like the look of this, but the painfully slow way it draws the screen before each shot, not to mention the could-be-better power meter, help muck everything up. Not our favourite, but it'll find its fans.

6



JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL (JAP/US)
Electronic Arts, 4 Mbit
1 or 2 players
What was a brilliant game on the Mega Drive and Amiga simply doesn't cut the mustard on the SNES. The programmers weren't equipped to convert it, as can be seen in the ropy, uninspiring graphics. It's said that the official UK release (called *John Madden '93*) – will make amends.

5

NOLAN RYAN'S BASEBALL (US)
Romstar, 4 Mbit
1 or 2 players
Just as slick as *Extra Innings*, but without the cute characters, and it's slightly trickier to control. Still, it's not a bad game overall.

7

PEBBLE BEACH GOLF LINKS (JAP/US)
T&E Soft, 8 Mbit + BB
1 to 4 players
The third addition to the 3D golf series and unsurprisingly very similar to the others. Accurate down to the waves on the beach, but the porn movie music is laughable.

8

PGA TOUR GOLF (JAP/US)
Electronic Arts, 4 Mbit
1 to 4 players
Slick presentation (so-called experts talking you through the holes, etc), masking the fact that this is a poor SNES conversion of an otherwise excellent sports game. On other systems *PGA Tour* is *the* golf sim, but here EA's lack of SNES expertise scuppers things. Still, you could do worse.

6

PRO SOCCER (JAP)
Imagineer, 4 Mbit + BB
1 or 2 players
A really shaky conversion of *Kick Off*, with crude graphics and hopeless gameplay. Buy the conversion of *Kick Off 2*, reviewed this issue, instead.

3

SD DODGEBALL (JAP)
Banpresto, 8 Mbit + BB
1 or 2 players
Based on an imaginary (we hope) sport which involves knocking out members of the opposing team by throwing the ball at them. This is but one of a series of Dodgeball games (*Fire Dodgeball* being another), and probably the worst.

5

SPACE FOOTBALL (US)
Triffix, 4 Mbit
1 player
If you've played *Ballblazer* on the Commodore 64, that's probably closest to this – football, played between two 'things' on a fast, 3D scrolling pitch. It's an idea that provides lots of thrills in the short-term, but that isn't really enough to justify splashing out this much loot on the game.

6

SUPER BASES LOADED (US)
Alternative name: Super Professional Baseball (JAP)
Jaleco, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
All works okay, but it's just as limited in scope as all the other baseball games on the Super Nintendo, and the graphics are horribly jerky.

6

SUPER BASES LOADED II (US)
Alternative name: Super Professional Baseball II (JAP)
Jaleco, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
Extraordinarily similar to *Super Bases Loaded I*.

6

SUPER BIRDIE RUSH (JAP)
Data East, 8 Mbit + BB
1 or 2 players
Cute cartoony golf game, featuring some nicely drawn courses, but a problem for those not fluent in Japanese. Not as playable as *Hole-in-One*, but it has the advantage of not being so dry in presentation.

7

SUPER BOWLING (JAP/US)
Athena, 4 Mbit
1 or 2 players
There isn't really enough to bowling to fill out a whole game. This one struggles to pad itself out with neat graphical interludes and so on, but the real thing's so much more fun. (And cheaper.)

4

SUPER CUP SOCCER (JAP)
Jaleco, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
A rival to *Super Soccer*? Not really. This takes a side-on, jerkily scrolling viewpoint and isn't going to impress anyone at all. That's a shame, because it goes into lots of detail – moves and rules-wise – and there are some nice graphical touches.

6

SUPER DUNKSHOT (JAP)
Alternative name: NCAA Basketball (US)
HAL, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
Famous for its 3D graphics – the pitch spins around and zooms in and out impressively. Brilliant sound effects, too. And, to cap it all, it plays a wicked game of basketball. A little slow at times, perhaps, and a little confusing, but on the whole, great.

8

SUPER FIRE PRO WRESTLING (JAP)
Human, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
Nowhere near as smart-looking

as *WWF*, but a much more challenging game. Each of the 20 available wrestlers behaves differently, for a start. But in one-player mode it's virtually impossible to get one over on the computer. You should be okay if you can live with the dull visuals and manage to haul in a friend, though.

6

SUPER SOCCER (US/UK)
Alternative name: Super Formation Soccer (JAP)
Human/Nintendo, 4Mbit
1 or 2 players
This is probably the closest you'll get to real, proper footy on the SNES at the moment. Your friends will be impressed by the 3D graphics, and it's jolly good fun to play. But it doesn't really feel much like football as such, perhaps because the rules have been messed around a bit. We're still waiting for the Super Nintendo's equivalent of *Sensible Soccer*.

8

SUPER TENNIS (JAP/US/UK)
Tonkin House, 4 Mbit
1 or 2 players
One of the best tennis games on any machine (and only rivalled by two fab tennis games on the PC Engine). The range of shots available is amazing, and they all behave realistically and are easy to access. There's a comprehensive line-up of tournaments, etc. Brilliant.

9

SUPER WWF (JAP/US/UK)
Acclaim, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
Marvellous graphics, and enormous fun to play – short-term. One snag is that, while you can choose from four different wrestlers, they all behave exactly the same. And there's no tournament system like on other versions, either – you win or lose a fight and that's it. The upshot of all this is that *WWF* can't be wholeheartedly recommended.

6

ULTIMATE FOOTBALL (JAP)
Sammy, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
American football – what a ridiculous sport, eh? Still, that needn't prevent *Ultimate Football* from being a decent game. The problem is that this is so limited in both scope and technical merit that it can't really be recommended to anyone except real footy fans.

6

WAIALAE COUNTRY CLUB (JAP/US)
T & E Soft, 8 Mbit + BB
1 to 4 players
The second of three golf games using the same programming and graphics (the others being *Augusta Golf* and *Pebble Beach*), but all representing different courses. Accurately depicted and probably the best golf series on the SNES so far.

8

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING (JAP)
Softel, 4 Mbit
1 or 2 players
Boxing games are very difficult to pull off, and this kind of thing happens as a result. It's well enough presented, but the gameplay is ridiculously simplistic and gets boring quickly. Steer well clear.

3

PLATFORM GAMES
Possibly the most popular category of all. (After all, *Super Mario World* is a platform game, and where would we be without that?) What counts here isn't so much the presence of lots of platforms, but a certain gameplaying style that platform leaping tends to encourage – an emphasis on timing and ingenuity rather than simple reflexes and bloodthirstyness. A useful rule of thumb here is that the bigger the game, the better, but in rating these we've looked at variety of gameplay and cunningness of design, as well as graphics and sound.

THE ADDAMS FAMILY (JAP/US/UK)
Ocean, 8 Mbit
1 player
Not the last word in platform games by any means, but still a polished and enjoyable romp, with a slick feel. A large game, featuring well-integrated adventure, puzzle and shoot-'em-up elements, providing an addictive challenge that gets quite frustrating in places, although a password system allows fairly quick completion.

7

DINOSAURS (JAP)
Alternative name: Dino City (US)
Irem, 8 Mbit
1 player
One of *Super Play*'s very favourite platform games ever, this has brilliant graphics, cute characters and plenty of amusing moments. The snag is, it's miles too easy to finish. But we love it all the same.

8

DRAGONS'S LAIR (UK)
Elite, 4 Mbit
1 player
This looks gorgeous, plays well and is far better than the straight conversion of the coin-ops that other machines have had to suffer. But the frustrating difficulty level hides a game that perhaps isn't as lengthy as it might have been.

8

HOME ALONE (US)
THQ, 4 Mbit
1 player
A thoroughly dire attempt to cash in on the success of the movie. Hopeless graphics and sound do nothing to rescue the banal gameplay from the claws of drudgery and tedium. A waste of money for fans of the movie – or anybody else for that matter.

2

HOOK (JAP/US)
Sony Imagesoft, 8 Mbit
1 player
Slow-moving, but otherwise an attractive platformer that ties in with the film quite neatly. It's a bit easy to finish, though, so it'll be no, er, Peter Pan.

7

JERRY BOY (JAP)
Alternative name: Smartball (US)
Sony Imagesoft, 8 Mbit
1 player
A run-of-the-mill platform game with only its blob-shaped hero to distinguish it from the crowd. We reckon it seems pretty average.

6

JOE AND MAC (JAP/US/UK)
Data East/Elite, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
A good conversion of the original arcade machine, with a few bits missing, and a few more tagged on. Graphically it's nice and colourful, but the tunes don't vary and the gameplay becomes very repetitive far too soon. Not much of a challenge here, but younger players should enjoy it.

7

KRUSTY'S SUPER FUN HOUSE (US/UK)
Acclaim, 8 Mbit
1 player
A curious blend of pie-throwing, puzzle-solving and platform action make this a refreshing challenge. Graphics and sound are reasonable, but it's the excellently paced gameplay that really makes the game. Passwords should be given out more regularly to reduce repetition, though.

8

MAGIC ADVENTURE (JAP)
Bandai, 4 Mbit
1 player
A jolly little platform game that combines wacky Japanese humour with cutsy sprites and backdrops. Hardly in the class of *Super Mario World* but moderately entertaining nevertheless.

6

MAGIC SWORD (JAP/US)
Capcom, 8 Mbit
1 player
Capcom's first disappointing release, not so surprising when you consider how bad the original arcade game was. Instead of giving it the *UN Squadron* treatment and improving the gameplay for the SNES, the programmers have chosen to simply translate the original. This is a bodge job on the whole, with mixed quality graphics and awful slow-down.

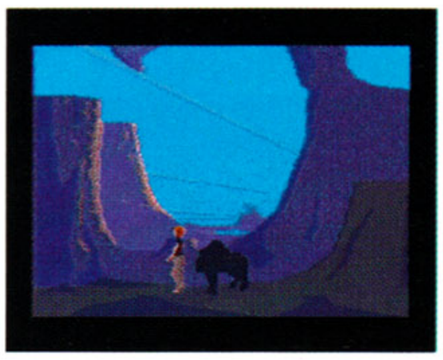
6

METAL JACKET (JAP)
Atlus, 8 Mbit
1 player
This is a horrible experience on any level. Atlus really aren't doing themselves any favours by attempting a platform game – a genre where you have to be really good to stand out. This is an *E-SWAT* clone with stilted animation, dire sound and completely inept gameplay.

2

MUSYA (JAP)
Datam, 8 Mbit
1 player
One of the worst Super Famicom games ever – though it's up against stiff competition. Initially, the nicely shaded backdrops give it the look of a *Ninja Spirit* clone, but when you see your hero mince along and twiddle his stick, it palls.

3



OUT OF THIS WORLD (US)
Alternative name: Another World (UK)
Interplay, 8 Mbit
1 player
The graphics on this one are absolutely superb – playing it is just like watching a film. The action is varied, and there are lots of great cinema-style close-up shots, but in the end there isn't really enough game there to make it a classic.

8

PRINCE OF PERSIA (JAP)
NCS, 8 Mbit
1 player
A superb conversion of the computer classic with new graphics, a brilliant intro and a fabulous *Lawrence Of Arabia*-style soundtrack. Not an easy game by any means, but the password system allows progression without too much trouble. Thoroughly recommended and a classic.

8

SPANKY'S QUEST (JAP/US)
Natsume, 4 Mbit
1 or 2 players
A monkey called Spanky? Bouncing bubbles? You just wander round lots of similar-looking screens, killing baddies (with the bubbles) and collecting keys. Boring.

5

SUPER ADVENTURE ISLAND (JAP/US/UK)
Hudsonsoft, 8 Mbit
1 player
Simplistic, *Wonderboy*-style gameplay abounds in this third instalment of the series made popular on the NES. Apart from the ugly Master Higgins, this is an attractive game, with colourful backgrounds and impressive Yuzo Koshiro dance tunes. Infinite continues mean a short-lived experience, though.

7

SUPER CASTLEVANIA 4 (JAP/US/UK)
Konami, 8 Mbit
1 player
A huge, sprawling sequel to the NES games. After a dull start, this turns into one of the best platform games on any system. More action is needed in places, but superb parallax and incredible soundtracks generate an atmosphere appreciated by serious gamers.

9

SUPER GHOULS 'N' GHOSTS (JAP/US/UK)
Capcom, 8 Mbit
1 player
Another sequel, unique to the SNES. It's got some truly wonderful graphics (though with a little slow-down) and nice tunes, but it's incredibly tough – and, as it lacks battery back-up or passwords, it can be a frustrating experience if you want to persevere with it. The huge levels only have a couple of restart points, too.

8

SUPER MARIO WORLD (JAP/US/UK)
Nintendo, 4 Mbit + BB
1 player
What more can we say about this huge game? On the downside, the backgrounds become repetitive, but apart from that, it's a gameplayer's dream come true – you'll want to spend weeks discovering every secret bit. Though real *Mario* aficionados tend to prefer Mario's third trip, this remains (along with *Zelda*) Nintendo's flagship game.

9

SUPER VALLIS (JAP)
Telenet, 8 Mbit
1 player
A conversion of the PC Engine CD ROM game, featuring the exploits of lots of Japanese girly characters but absolutely no excitement. It's just far too contrived, boring and linear to bother with.

5

XANDRA'S BIG ADVENTURE (JAP)
Namcot, 8 Mbit
1 player
An obscure platform game that ought to be better known. It's got a great central character, and the gameplay, though a little patchy, is a winner.

8

PUZZLE GAMES
These are games that require sheer brainpower, and nothing much else. Other than that, anything goes, explaining why maze games sit alongside chess games, and Chinese puzzle games cuddle up to games with lemmings in. The difference between these and strategy games is that strategy games are 'big' things, with battle plans, mission statistics and movement points, while puzzle games are smaller scale and more intricate. (This is all very subjective, we know, but it works for us, okay?)

BOMBUZAL (JAP)
Alternative name: Ka-Blooey (US)
Kemco, 4 Mbit
1 player
You have to clear bombs from mazes of tiles by setting off chain reactions, without getting blown

up yourself – the levels are well designed and take lots of skill to negotiate. But (sigh) the graphics are dreary, and, strangely, it's boring to play. Based on an Amiga original.

4

CHESSMASTER (US)
Mindscape, 4 Mbit
1 or 2 players
This plays a strong game (as far as we can tell!), but there's room for improvement. It's badly presented, the tunes after each move – ridiculous idea – are more irritating than you'd believe possible. And check out that menu!

5

LEMMINGS (JAP/US/UK)
Sunsoft, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
This has been a huge hit on every format it's been released on. It takes a while to get to grips with, true, but *Lemmings* is one of the most original, ingenious and downright addictive games ever. Each level has a password, and there are loads of them (more than, for example, the Amiga version). You've got to buy it.

9

OTHELLO WORLD (JAP)
Tsukuda, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
Plays a strong game of *Othello* (if you set it to 'difficult'), looks good, and has some cute touches. But why on earth would anyone want to spend $40 on a cartridge that plays *Othello*? Fine for brushing up your technique, but otherwise very, very sad indeed.

6

SUPER SHANGHAI (JAP)
Hot B, 8 Mbit
1 player
It's hard to see what's 'super' about it, other than a showy-offy intro and the odd silly sound effect, but as a version of *Shanghai*, the classic puzzle game, it works fine. Relaxing and gently compulsive, but not really worth the dosh.

6

RPG/ADVENTURE GAMES
The most popular game genre in Japan by far (and probably the least popular over here), import RPGs tend to suffer from the fact that they rely so much on text, making most of them unintelligible to non-Japanese speakers. Because of this, very few of these games get imported into this country, but we've covered the ones we managed to get our hands on anyway, if only to warn you away. (As mentioned before, games rendered unplayable by the language barrier get an 'Impossible to judge' rating.) If and when any of them get translated into English for the UK or US markets, we'll run a full review then. Still, let's look at the upside for a moment – these games generally offer bags of lastability and value for money, if only you can work out what's going on...

ACTRAISER (JAP/US/UK)
Enix/Quintet, 6/8 Mbit + BB
1 player
A brilliant combination of strategy and platform action. Graphically it's very well done, but the visuals are left eating dust by the outstanding music. Make sure you buy the US version – it's much more playable with English text!

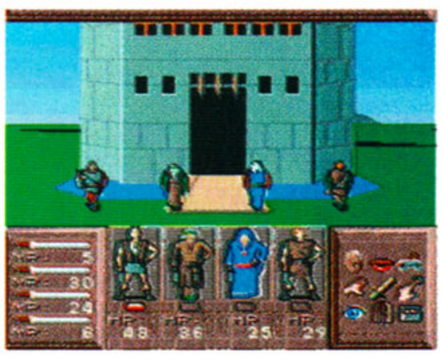
9

ARCANA (US)
Alternative name: Card Master (JAP)
HAL, 8 Mbit + BB
1 player
An RPG based around a first person perspective (like *Dungeon Master*) sounds good, but it suffers from a very plodding pace – the combat scenes are particularly long and drawn-out. Graphically it's okay, and the music is well done, but only recommended for die-hard RPG fans.

6

DRAGON BALL Z (JAP)
Bandai, 8 Mbit + BB
1 player
The original Japanese *Dragon Ball* anime series has appeared in the 8-bit Famicom (NES) before, but this new version is the first available for the Super Famicom. An RPG with combat scenes thrown in and enough Japanese text to scare away the most persevering gamer. Extremely 8-bit in look too.

Impossible to judge



DRAKKHEN (JAP/US)
Kemco, 8 Mbit + BB
1 player
Based on a French 16-bit computer RPG/adventure, this has reasonable graphics, but an awful combat system lets the side down. Most people will find this a real bore – even avid RPG fans – but if you *are* a *Drakkhen* fan, make sure you get the US version (obviously!).

6

FINAL FANTASY II (US)
Alternative name: Final Fantasy IV (JAP)
Square, 8 Mbit + BB
1 player
A strange one this, as in Japan it's actually the fourth in a very popular series. This is the first version to make it to the SNES, and while it's graphically basic, the lovely music and the involving nature of the quest lifts it way above lesser RPGs.

8

KINGS QUEST V
Bronson, 8 Mbit + BB
1 player
Nothing to do with the Sierra range of computer adventures, this recent addition to an inexplicably popular range of *Zelda*-style FRPs looks, to the untrained British eye at least, like a big pile of steaming nob. If you speak Japanese it might, of course, be fab – we doubt it.

Impossible to judge

LAGOON (JAP/US)
Kemco, 8 Mbit + BB
1 player
This is a fairly involving game, taking some elements from the *Zelda* series, but forgetting a lot of the more important ones – including a map, which can prove extremely irritating in certain areas. However, the graphics and sound are nice enough – this *is* worth considering, but only after you've played *Zelda*, *Final Fantasy II* and *Soul Blader*.

7

LEGEND OF THE MYSTICAL NINJA (US)
Alternative name: Goeman 3 (JAP)
Konami, 8 Mbit
1 or 2 players
Still one of the best games for the system (if you like this sort of thing), mixing RPG adventure-style wandering with side-on platform action. It's got some wonderful oriental music, beautifully drawn graphics and is a supremely addictive challenge. Though the Japanese version is fairly accessible, without too much of a language barrier, buy the US cart to get the best value from this one.

9

ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS II (JAP/US)
Koei, 8 Mbit + BB
1-12 players
If you've got lots of friends(!) this is at least a sociable game. Loads of interlocking ancient Chinese kingdoms make alliances, split up, then make other alliances, lots of people (presumably) get killed, and we can't make sense of any of it. The recently-become-available US version reveals a fairly simple little game under all the maps and text-boxes, but it's still not recommended.

5

SD GREAT BATTLE (JAP)
Banpresto, 6 Mbit
1 player
Japan's hugely popular *Super Deformer* series has spawned a lot of Super Famicom spin-off games, and they sell well, no matter how cruddy! This was the first to emerge, and really isn't anything to get excited about, being a crusty old arcade adventure with very tedious gameplay. You have been warned!

4

SD GUNDAM (JAP)
Bandai, 8 Mbit + BB
1 player
Again we head off to Japanese RPG-land, this variant starring a 'Super Deformed' (ie squished and cuty-fied) version of *Gundam*, the most popular 'mecha' robot character in Japan. The format is very traditional Japanese RPG, but the rather crappy graphics and sound and use of Japanese text make this game virtually unplayable.

Impossible to judge

SOUL BLADER (JAP/US)
Enix, 8 Mbit + BB
1 or 2 players
Not the sequel to *Actraiser* as once thought, but a different RPG altogether. Brilliant graphics, nice sound, great gameplay and Japanese text! Wait for the US version called *Soul Blazer* due out very soon.

8

SUPER CHINESE WORLD (JAP)
Culture Brain, 8 Mbit
1 player
A sequel to a popular 8-bit Famicom game called *Little Ninja Bros*. The usual overhead viewpoint changes at regular intervals for combat. Cutish but rather 8-bit.

impossible to judge

SUPER NINJA (JAP)
Koei, 12 Mbit + BB
1 player
You'd never know this was 12 meg – it has all the flat colours, simple graphics and laughable animation of an early NES game. It uses the same overhead view as *Zelda*, et al, but being Japanese will prove impossible to play for most people. Some loss.

Impossible to judge

SUPER WAGAN ISLAND (JAP)
Namcot, 8 Mbit
1 player
Funny, with cute graphics and likeable characters, this semi-arcade, semi-text based arcade adventure seems pitched towards the younger player – we got a fair way into it without understanding what was going on. (It's all in Japanese!)

Impossible to judge

XARDION (JAP/US)
Asmik, 8 Mbit + BB
1 player
From the makers of *D Force* comes another disaster! This time it's an *E-SWAT* clone – you control a robot that must progress through different zones, each with a guardian at the end. Sounds reasonable so far, but the dreadful graphics, awful sonics and pathetic gameplay and structure ruin it.

4

YS III (JAP/US)
Tonkin House, 8 Mbit + BB
1 player
Not as good as the prequel (*YS Books 1 & 2*) on the PC-Engine CD ROM, but still a top quality RPG nevertheless. This time, instead of an overview of the landscape, you get a scrolling side-on perspective, and though it's not as big as the first two games, it's fun.

7

ZELDA 3: A LINK TO THE PAST (JAP/ US)
Nintendo, 8 Mbit + BB
1 player
The long-awaited 16-bit *Zelda* is a brilliantly designed and implemented adventure that puts similar games to shame, in much the same way as *Mario* dominates the platform world – unsurprising when Nintendo's top programmer was involved in both games. This is, of course, utterly fabulous, though Zelda addicts may complain it's not as long and drawn out as previous games.

9

MISCELLANEOUS
Erm, and here's where we've put all the games we couldn't shoehorn into any other category. A pretty motley bunch, aren't they?

BART'S NIGHTMARE (US)
Acclaim, 8 Mbit
1 player
The formula may not sound too promising – lots of little sub-games rather than one big one – but this is absolutely superb, and very weird! Wonderful graphics, lots of humour, and it's challenging too.

9

CAMELTRY (JAP)
Alternative name: On The Ball (US)
Taito, 8 Mbit
1 player
The idea of a rotating Mode 7 maze with a ball bouncing around it is a good one, but Taito haven't got the most from it. The levels are all too easy to complete, and once you've seen the lot you won't return.

5

MARIO PAINT (JAP/US)
Nintendo, 8 Mbit + BB
1 'player'
A painting and music package that's really only for youngsters. It's very basic (only 16 colours? On a system with thousands?) and once you've drawn something, what do you do with it next? In its favour is that it's free with the Nintendo mouse – but wait until that's on sale separately.

3

SUPER PANG (JAP)
Alternative name: Super Buster Bros (US)
Capcom, 4 Mbit
1 player
The arcade original was a fantastic game, but that allowed two people to play at once. This is a good conversion, with smart graphics and plenty of speed, but unfortunately only one can play, and that soon gets boring

6

THE ROCKETEER (JAP/US)
IGS, 8 Mbit
1 player
Lovely graphics, but that's about it. Playing this game basically consists of watching a string of mini-games in which you don't really get much say at all – it's generally a matter of luck whether you proceed from one game to the next. This is awful.

3

TOTAL!

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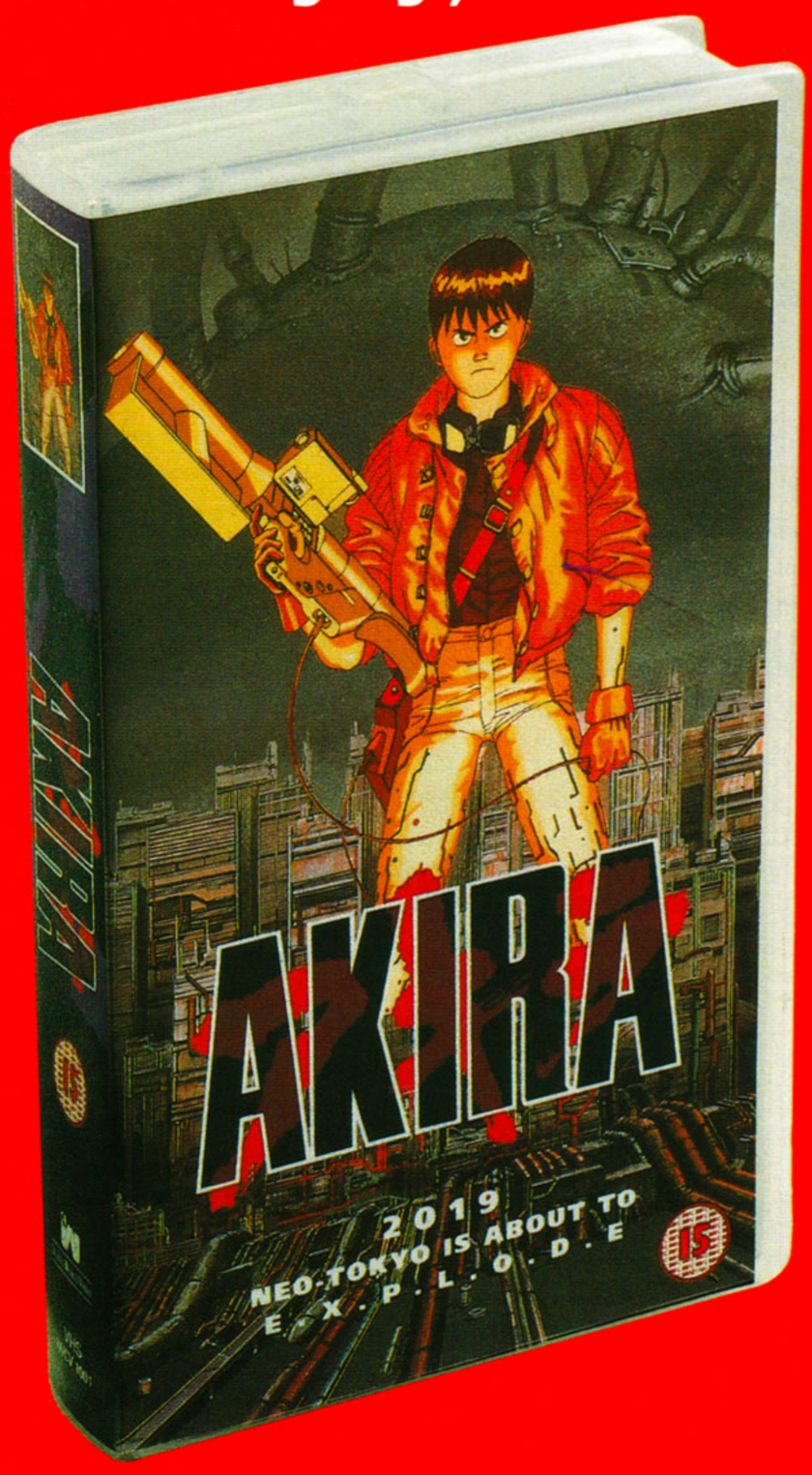

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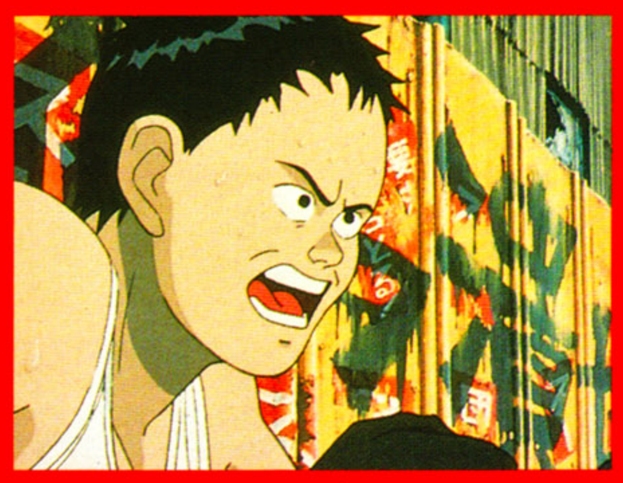

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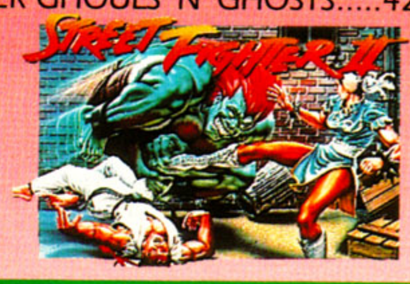

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DATEBOOK

Twice the size this month, because we've got twice the games to fit in! The Datebook is *Super Play*'s at-a-glance guide to the major Super Nintendo releases from Japan, America and the UK for the rest of the year, as based on current release schedules. The chart is dominated by Japanese releases because a) there are more of them than UK or American ones, b) games tend to come out in Japan about a month or so earlier than they do in America, so we mention them because they'll be the first time a game has appeared anywhere and c) because the Japanese are that much better at posting early release schedules. Where there's a space in the chart – usually an exact date or the type of game a release is – it's because we couldn't get hold of the information at time of press.

MONTH	DATE	GAME TITLE	GAME TYPE	PUBLISHER	COUNTRY
Nov	–	Bulls vs. Lakers	sport	Electronic Arts	US
Nov	13	Lennus	RPG	Asmik	Jap
Nov	15	Best Of The Best	beat-'em-up	Electrobrain	US
Nov	15	Road Riot	driving game	THQ	US
Nov	mid	Kick Off	football game	Imagineer	UK
Nov	mid	SWIV	shoot-'em-up	Coconuts	Jap
Nov	20	American Ultra Quiz	puzzle	Tomy	Jap
Nov	20	Power Athelete	beat-'em-up	Kaneko	Jap
Nov	20	Human Grand Prix	driving game	Human	Jap
Nov	21	Cacoma Knight	puzzle game	Datam	Jap
Nov	late	Barbarossa	strategy	Sammy	Jap
Nov	late	Major Title	sport	Irem	Jap
Nov	late	Royal Conquest	strategy	Jaleco	Jap
Nov	late	North Star Ken 6	beat-'em-up	Toei	Jap
Nov	late	Dragon's Earth	RPG	Human	Jap
Nov	late	Mystery Circle	puzzle	GA Amusement	Jap
Nov	late	Project Olympus	RPG	Banpresto	Jap
Nov	late	Silver Saga 2	RPG	Seta	Jap
Nov	late	Mickey's Magical Quest	action	Capcom	Jap
Nov	late	Wizardry V	RPG	Ascii	Jap
Nov	late	Super Strike Gunner	shoot-'em-up	Activision	UK
Nov	late	Spindizzy Worlds	puzzle	Activision	UK
Nov	27	Satoru Nakjima's Super F1 Hero	driving game	Varie	Jap
Nov	27	Volleyball Twin	sport	Tonkin House	Jap
Nov	27	Pro Baseball League '93	sport	Epic	Jap
Nov	27	Assault Suits Valken	shoot-'em-up	NCS Masiya	Jap
Nov	27	Gun Force	shoot-'em-up	Irem	Jap/US
Nov	27	Song Master	RPG	Yanoman	Jap
Nov	27	Outer World	action	JVC	Jap
Nov	27	Pro Baseball League '93	sport	Epic/Sony	Jap
Nov	27	Fatal Fury	beat-'em-up	Takara	Jap
Nov	30	Terminator 2	shoot-'em-up	Acclaim	US
Nov	–	Space Mega Force	shoot-'em-up	Toho	US
Nov	–	Super Star Wars	shoot-'em-up	JVC/Lucasfilm	US
Nov	–	Dragon's Lair	platform game	Elite	UK
Nov	–	Chessmaster	board game	Mindscape	UK
Nov	–	Spiderman And The X-Men	action	Acclaim	UK/US
Nov	–	Mah Jong	board game	IGS	Jap
Nov	–	John Madden '93	sport	Electronic Arts	US
Nov	–	Harley's Humongous Adventure	action	Electronic Arts	US
Nov	–	Monopoly	board game	Tomy	Jap
Nov	–	Super Sokoban World	puzzle	Pack-in-video	Jap
Nov	–	Project Olympus	RPG	Banpresto	Jap
Nov	–	Imperium	shoot-'em-up	Vic Tokai	US
Nov	–	Human's Grand Prix	racing game	Human	Jap
Nov	–	Cal Ripkin Baseball	sports	Mindscape	US
Nov	–	Gods	action	Mindscape	US
Nov	–	The Hunt For Red October	strategy	Hi-Tech	US
Nov	–	Tom & Jerry	action	Hi-Tech	US
Nov	–	Showdown! Brasnan Bars	action	Laser Soft	Jap
Nov	–	Super Volleyball '92	sport	Video System	Jap
Nov	–	Actraiser	action	Enix	UK
Nov	–	Blazing Skies	flight sim	Nintendo	UK
Nov	–	Super Ghouls & Ghosts	platform game	Capcom	UK
Nov	–	Pilotwings	flight sim	Nintendo	UK
Nov	–	Cool World	action	Ocean	US
Nov	–	Robocop 3	action	Ocean	UK
Nov	–	Test Drive 2: The Duel	driving game	Accolade	US
Nov	–	Warp Drive	simulation	Accolade	US
Nov	–	Lethal Weapon	action	Ocean	US
Nov	–	On The Ball	puzzle	Taito	US
Nov	–	Cyber Spin	driving game	Takara	US
Nov	–	Might & Magic 2	RPG	Sammy	US
Nov	–	Spellcraft	–	–	US
Nov	–	Musya	beat-'em-up	Seta	US
Nov	–	Super Battle-up	sports	Namco	US
Nov	–	F1 Exhaust Heat	driving	Ocean	UK
Nov	–	Rocky & Bullwinkle	–	–	US
Nov	–	Desert Strike	shoot-'em-up	Electronic Arts	US
Nov	–	Golden Fighter: Hyper Version	beat-'em-up	Culture Brain	Jap
Nov	–	X-Zone (Super Scope)	shoot-'em-up	Kemco	US
Nov	–	NBA All-Star Challenge	sport	LJN	US
Nov	–	Prince of Persia	action	Konami	US
Nov	–	Dream TV	sport	Triffix	US
Nov	–	Shadowrun	RPG	Data East	Jap
Nov	–	Cybernator	action	Konami	US
Nov	–	Wing Comander	action	Mindscape	US
Nov	–	The Terminator	action	Mindscape	US
Nov	–	Sküljagger	action	Am. Softworks	US
Nov	–	Q-Bert 3	action	NTVIC	US
Nov	–	Blazeon	shoot-'em-up	Atlus	US
Dec	1	Warlord Nobunaga	strategy	Tanoman	Jap
Dec	1	Super Black Bass	simulation	Hot B	Jap
Dec	1	Nobuo Serisawa's Golf	sport	Toho	Jap
Dec	6	Final Fantasy V	RPG	Square	Jap
Dec	11	Psycho Dream	action	Riot	Jap
Dec	11	Stealth	puzzle	Hect	Jap
Dec	15	Super Kick Off	sport	Misawa Ents	Jap
Dec	18	Amazing Tennis	sport	Pack-In Video	Jap
Dec	18	Tiny Toon Adventures	action	Konami	Jap
Dec	18	King Of The Rally	driving game	Meldac	Jap
Dec	18	Super Tetris 2 + Bombliss	puzzle	Bulletproof	Jap
Dec	18	Super Flying Hero	beat-'em-up	Sofel	Jap
Dec	–	Rushing Beat 2	beat-'em-up	Jaleco	Jap
Dec	–	Super High Impact	sports	Acclaim	US
Dec	–	Mickey's Magical Quest	action	Capcom	US
Dec	–	Alien 3	shoot-'em-up	Acclaim	US
Dec	–	Arabian Knights Legend	–	Culture Brain	Jap
Dec	–	Battlefield Soccer	sport	Banpresto	Jap
Dec	–	Battle Tech	simulation	JVC	Jap
Dec	–	Combat Tribes	beat-'em-up	Technos	Jap
Dec	–	The Crying Dragon's Mah Jong	board game	IGS	Jap
Dec	–	Mystery Of The Black Cape	RPG	Natsume	Jap
Dec	–	Super Volley	sport	Video Systems	Jap
Dec	–	Ranma 1/2 II	beat-'em-up	NCS Masiya	Jap
Dec	–	Grand Sumo	beat-'em-up	Namco	Jap
Dec	–	Caveman Ninja II	action	Data East	Jap
Dec	–	Actrion	action	Tecmo	Jap
Dec	–	Super NBA Basketball	sport	Tecmo	Jap
Dec	–	SD Flying Dragon	–	–	Jap
Dec	–	Naxat Super Pinball	simulation	Naxat	Jap
Dec	–	Triff: The Fire Monster's Treasure	RPG	Cyclone	Jap
Dec	–	SD Flying Dragon's Fist	action	Culture Brain	Jap
Dec	–	Alien vs. Predator	action	IGS	Jap
Dec	–	Back To The Future	–	–	Jap
Dec	–	F-1 Exhaust Heat 2	driving game	Seta	Jap
Dec	–	The Search For Wally	action	Tomy	Jap
Dec	–	Battle Blaze	beat-'em-up	Sammy	US
Dec	–	Super Shadow of the Beast	action	IGS	US
Dec	–	MVP Football	sport	Capcom	US
Dec	–	Breath of Fire	RPG	Capcom	Jap
Dec	–	Septentrion	action	Human	Jap
Dec	–	SD Gundam Legend 2	RPG	Bandai	Jap
Dec	–	Exhaust Heat II	driving game	Seta	Jap
Dec	–	Roadrunner vs. Wile E Coyote	action	Sunsoft	Jap
Dec	–	Sumo Spirits	beat-'em-up	Takara	Jap
Dec	–	Firepower 2000 (SWIV)	shoot-'em-up	Sunsoft	US
Dec	–	Mechwarrior	action	Activision	US
Dec	–	Super Valis IV	action	Atlus	US
Dec	–	Death Valley Ralley	action	Sunsoft	US
Dec	–	Metal Jack	action	Atlus	US

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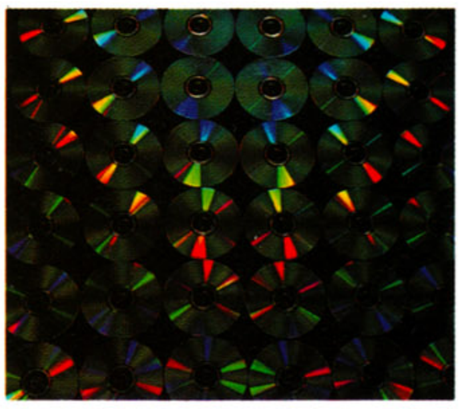
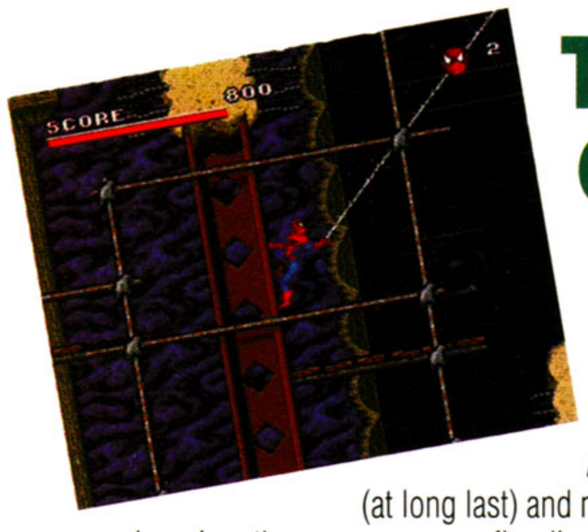
SUPER NINTENDO CD ROM!



Next issue we're covering all the hottest info on CD technology, and how it'll relate to your Super Nintendo. Plus, the latest on other high tech SNES add-ons and developments. For a look into the future, the January issue of *Super Play* is *the* place to be.

AND MORE: THE BEST TIPS!

The second part of our epic *Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past* guide, plus a Super Player's guide to *Actraiser*, Ask Ade, Gamefreak and lots more. You know where to come if you want to win at SNES games.



THE BEST GAME REVIEWS!

Next month thrill to reviews of *Super Star Wars*, *Spiderman & The X-Men*, *Super Double Dragon*, *Major Title*, *The Blues Brothers*, plus *Super Kick Off* (at long last) and maybe, just maybe, *Equinox*. With Christmas looming, the new games are flooding in. Join us next issue for the most reliable, accurate and downright sexy reviews around – and for more of them, too!

THE MOST PAGES!

Super Play remains by far the biggest Super Nintendo magazine on the market (the rest of them struggle to fill 84 pages) and the best! Things can only get better. Join us next issue, when we *really* get into our stride...

The third, and best yet, issue of *Super Play* will go on sale at newsagents up and down the country on Thursday 3 December! *ORDER YOUR COPY TODAY!*

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CARTOGRAPHY

For the benefit of new readers, here's a quick run-down of some of the most commonly encountered jargon you'll find in *Super Play*...

Adaptor: These come in various forms, but their basic job is to allow software from one country to run on an SNES from another. (See 'grey import'.)

Battery back-up (BB): Switch off a normal cart and all your hard work will disappear into electronic oblivion. Switch off one with battery back-up, however, and it'll keep all your high-scores and saved positions tucked away for another day.

Bit: A one or a zero. Stick lots of these together in the right order and you've got yourself a game. There are about 8 million in the average cart.

CD ROM: A method for storing absolutely huge games on compact discs rather than cartridges. The SNES CD ROM drive is due to appear next year, and promises to be a world-beater.

CPU: Central Processing Unit, the chip at the heart of any computer. In the case of the Super Nintendo it's a 65sc816 running at 3.58MHz (is this helping at all?), and it's in charge of all the graphics and sound chips that make your console so fab.

Grey import: Nintendo don't tend to release games in the UK until several months, sometimes years, after they've appeared in Japan and the US. If you want to get hold of them sooner, you'll have to hunt around for a grey import version. The mail order ads in this issue are the best place to start, but remember, to run an import cart on a UK machine you'll need a special adaptor that costs £15-£25.

Meg: Short for megabit. A million bits.

Megabyte: 8 megabits (the average cart size).

Mode 7: A unique Super Nintendo feature that gives you 3D screen scaling and rotation.

NES: Nintendo Entertainment System. The earlier, cruder console that came before the Super Nintendo. Rather like John the Baptist, in fact.

NTSC: The Japanese and American TV system. NTSC TVs are less flickery, but also less detailed, than UK ones, while NTSC games run faster than PAL ones, and also use the full screen for the game image, without borders.

PAL: The television system used in the UK. Your UK Super Nintendo will use PAL, and will therefore plug straight into your telly's aerial socket. A foreign one won't, though, so make sure you've got a SCART TV (see SCART) before buying one.

Parallax Scrolling: The process where different parts of the background move at different speeds, giving the impression of depth.

RPG: Role Playing Game. One of those weird games with wizards, orks and action points in. Also called an FRP (Fantasy Role Playing game.)

SCART: New TVs often have a SCART socket which cuts out a lot of the irrelevant electronics that deal with television programmes. If your telly's got one, plug your Super Nintendo into it for a better picture.

Scrolling: Simply the process where the background moves across the screen, sort of like a film camera panning.

SNES: Super Nintendo Entertainment System, aka Super Nintendo. The business.

Sprite: Anything that moves around on the screen. Mario is a sprite.

Super Famicom: The Japanese name for the Super Nintendo.

Super Scope: The bazooka-shaped light gun for the SNES, which is now packaged with it.

***Total!*:** Our sister mag, a rather ace multi-format Nintendo thing.

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Editor: Matt Bielby
Art Editor: Traci Rochester
Production Editor: Sue Grant
Staff Writers: Jason Brookes, Jonathan Davies
Art Assistant: Jeremy Bridgeman
Advertising Manager: Alison Morton
Advertising Executive: Jane Geddes
Classified Sales Executive: Diana Erskine
Advertising Production: Claire Fullick
Publisher: Steve Carey
Group Publishing Director: Greg Ingham
Promotions Manager: Michele Harris
Circulation Director: Sue Hartley
Managing Director: Chris Anderson

Contributors: Nick Aspell, Nick Burne, Helen McCarthy, Lisa Nicholls, Adrian Price, Tai Ono, Wil Overton.
Photography: Ashton James
Artwork: Nick Davies, Wil Overton
Cover: Wil Overton
Lino & Scanning: Simon Chittenden, John Moore, Chris Stocker, Simon Windsor.

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Super Play, Future Publishing Ltd, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.
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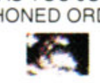
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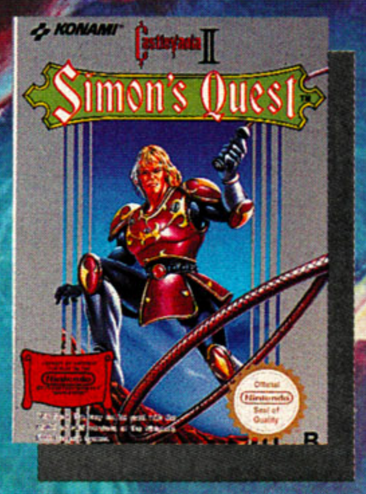

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